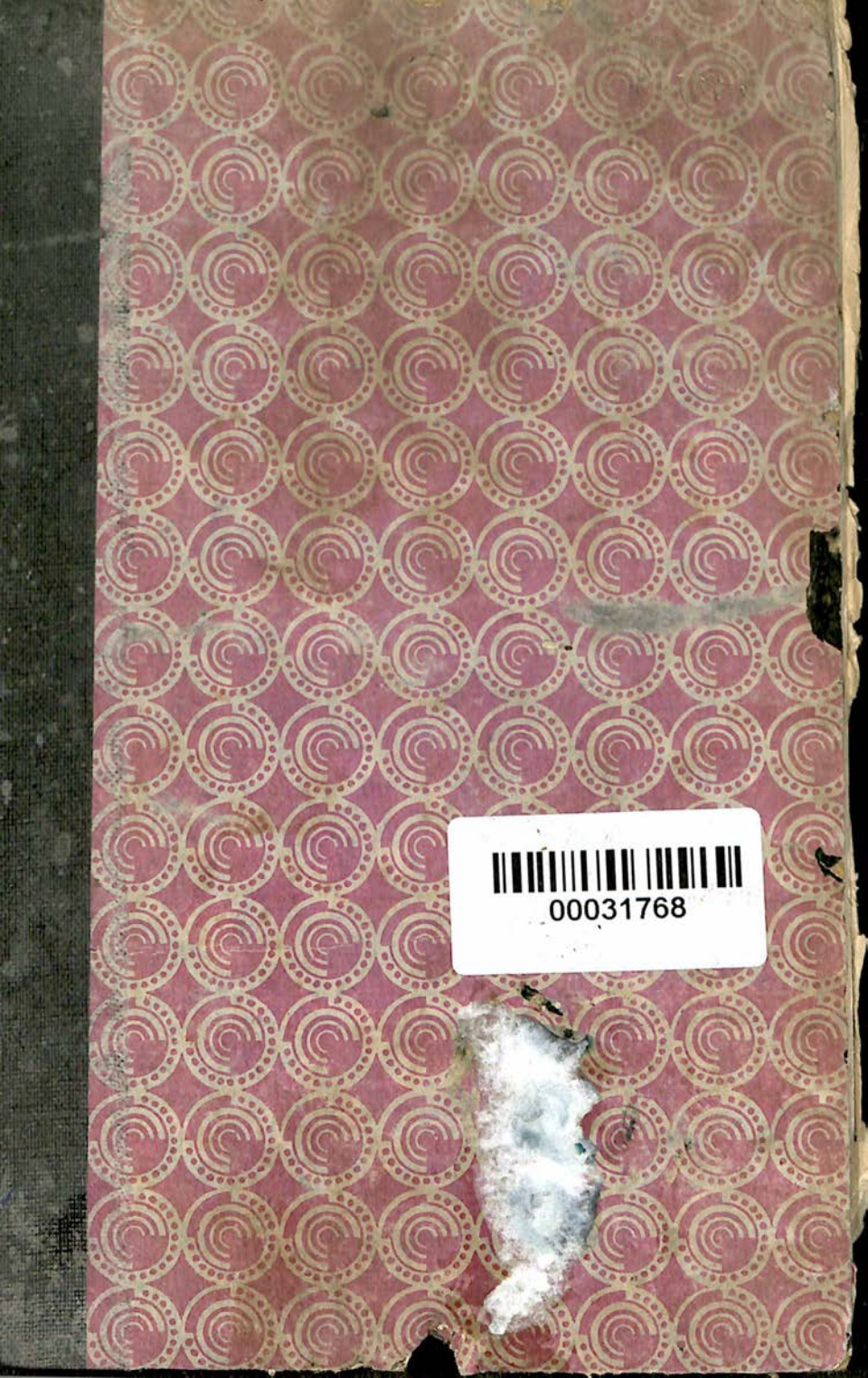

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THE REAL LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

VOL. I



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From an engraving after the picture by Vanloo

Louis XV

THE REAL LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

By Lieut.-Colonel ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, D.S.O. Author of "Sidelights on the Court of France," "Louis XIV. in Court and Camp," "The Regent of the Roués," etc.

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To

MY OLD FRIEND

BARON NICOLAS DE VAY

SEIGNEUR DE VAJA

KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

ANDREW HAGGARD

PREFATORY NOTE

ONLY when the brave, dissipated, good-natured, and humane Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, sunk to his death upon the shoulder of Madame de Falari can Louis XV. be said to have ascended the throne of France. This was on December 2nd, 1723. Prior to this date, although the taciturn little boy Louis had succeeded his great-grandfather eight years earlier, the Duc d'Orléans had been practically King. The subsequent rule of the fourth of the Bourbon Monarchs, who was, as if in irony, termed The Well-Beloved, extended to May, 1774, when he closed a degraded life by a degraded death.

The reign of *le Bien-Aimé* seems naturally to divide itself into two periods. It is with the earlier period, that which terminates with the year after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, concluded in October, 1748, that the first of these volumes deals. It may, in contradistinction to that which follows, be characterised as the period of the Priest and the Petticoat, while in 1749 began those struggles with the clergy which eventually banished the Jesuit and left the Woman supreme.

Up to 1749, however, the Priest, under one guise or another, and the Petticoat, in frequently changing form, ruled contemporaneously and frequently conjointly. After that date the ruling element became gradually centred in the decision of Pompadour, an invalid and *bourgeoise* mistress who had long ceased to charm, or the whim of du Barry, a vulgar and self-assured courtesan who sprang from the lowest ranks of the people.

Great indeed is the change with which we are confronted when we close the volume of the atheistical Regent of the Roués and open that of the degrading days of Louis XV., the devout pupil, so far as form goes, of holy Mother Church.

One passes at once from the full light of day at the Palais-Royal, where every action, no matter how well intentioned, no matter how ignoble, takes place before all the world, to the gloom of night in the darksome *petits cabinets* of Versailles. There, one unpatriotic trick, one infamous or inglorious intrigue succeeds the other, all alike evolved from the cunning brain of the Jesuit without; it may be at Issy or Saint-Sulpice close by, or in the tricky purlieus of the Court of Madrid.

Filtering through the lips of the old-womanish Cardinal Fleury, those of the four successive Nesle sisters, those of the three far too favourite daughters of the Monarch, or of Pompadour, inspired by her relatives the farmers-general Pâris, these intrigues reach the licentious

Monarch in his besotted moments of debauchery and semi-intoxication.

The result is seen in actions, apparently those of the weak, obstinate, and cowardly King himself, which tend to the discredit of his Government, the disgrace of his kingdom, and the untold misery of millions of his subjects.

Nor do these priestly and womanish intrigues which, under Fleury, owing to his weakness for a bigoted Austria, sacrifice a French army in the snows at Prague, affect France alone. It will be seen in the following pages how they cause the blood to flow in streams all over Europe, and how, time and time again, that heroic figure Frederick the Great, the faithful ally of France, is treacherously abandoned owing to their far-reaching influences.

ANDREW HAGGARD.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE BISHOP AND THE MARQUISE DE PRIE	1
II.	HOW A QUEEN WAS MADE	19
III.	HOW A QUEEN WAS DEPOSED	33
IV.	FRANCE, AFTER THE MARQUISE	45
V.	A TROUBLESOME QUEEN	60
VI.	THE DUC DE RICHELIEU AND PRINCE EUGÈNE	74
VII.	THE TRIALS OF MARIE LESCZYNSKA	86
VIII.	THE AFFAIRE CADIÈRE.	96
IX.	LOUIS'S FIRST LOVES—AND BELLE-ISLE	111
X.	THE WAR OF THE POLISH SUCCESSION	125
XI.	MADEMOISELLE DE NESLE	137
XII.	THE HOUSE OF ORLÉANS	151
XIII.	THE GREAT FREDERICK	161
XIV.	A ROYAL CONSPIRACY AND A DOTARD'S FOLLIES	171
XV.	THE INSTALLATION OF A FAVOURITE.	189
XVI.	THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION	197
XVII.	THE DISGRACE OF THE FAVOURITES	208
XVIII.	VENGEANCE AND DEATH OF MADAME DE CHÂTEAUROUX	225
XIX.	THE BATTLE OF FONTENOY	234
XX.	MADEMOISELLE LECOUVREUR AND THE MARÉCHAL DE SAXE	249

CHAP. PAGE

XXI. MADEMOISELLE POISSON — MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR 259

XXII. BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE AND FLORA MACDONALD 268

XXIII. MANŒUVRES OF THE MARQUIS D'ARGENSON 280

XXIV. THE FAMILY, POMPADOUR, VOLTAIRE, AND PEACE 293

XXV. A VENGEANCE FOR MADAME DE POMPADOUR 311

XXVI. MANNERS AND MORALS AT THE COURT OF STANISLAS 323

XXVII. COURT ETIQUETTE AND POMPADOUR'S MAGNIFICENCE 338

ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I

LOUIS XV. (*Photogravure*) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

CARDINAL FLEURY 4

MARIE LESCZYNSKA (*after Vanloo*) 32

JOSEPH PÂRIS-DUVERNEY 42

PRINCE EUGÈNE OF SAVOY 78

MARIE LESCZYNSKA (*after Nattier*) 94

MARÉCHAL DE BELLE-ISLE 120

FREDERICK THE GREAT 166

EMPRESS MARIE THERESE 184

MADAME DE CHÂTEAUROUX 230

MAURICE DE SAXE 254

MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR 260

PRINCE CHARLES EDWARD STUART 278

MADAME MARIE LOUISE ÉLISABETH DE FRANCE 288

MADAME HENRIETTE OF FRANCE 304

COMTE PHÉLIPPEAUX DE MAUREPAS 320

STANISLAS LESCZYNSKI 332

THE REAL LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

CHAPTER I

The Bishop and the Marquise de Prie

1723 AND LATER

WHEN the dissolute Regent, Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, expired upon the shoulder of Madame de Falari, on December 2nd, 1723, the nod of an old man's head transferred the Kingdom of France.

The dwarfish little Minister of State Prisons, la Vrillière, who in his day signed no less than fifty thousand *lettres de cachet*, had a paper ready in his pocket in case of the Regent's death. This was a patent appointing M. le Duc de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, to the office of First Minister, towards which supreme post even before the Regent's decease M. le Duc had been casting covetous eyes.

First Minister was the title which had been assumed by the Duc d'Orléans since the death of, that disgrace to France, the infamous Cardinal Dubois, and the recently declared majority of the boy-King Louis XV. That Prince had, however, practically remained all-powerful Regent to his last moments, which had come with

such awful suddenness. Louis XV., great-grandson of Louis XIV. and third son of the Duc de Bourgogne and Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, was born on February 15th, 1710. He was crowned at Reims on October 25th, 1722, and his majority declared on February 19th, 1723.

Still very childish for his age, and taciturn in manner to a remarkable degree, the little boy was entirely under the thumb of his aged preceptor, Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus. Hastily warning M. le Duc, before any steps could be taken by the Duc de Chartres, son of the late Regent, la Vrillière repaired with the scheming scion of the house of Condé to the King's apartments. These apartments, in the château of Versailles, were situated just above those occupied by the Regent. who was now lying dead below.

It was early on the winter's night, while the Duc de Noailles and Duc de Guiche were in Paris seeking for the Regent's son, that the first Prince of the Blood was forestalled at Versailles.

The Duc de Bourbon found the young King with his eyes red from weeping. Hard and cold as was the boy's nature, he had latterly become attached to the kindly disposition of his cousin the Regent; moreover, tears came easily to him.

While the gnome-like Duc de la Vrillière fingered the oath written out ready in his pocket, the Duc de Bourbon demanded of the King to make him First Minister.

The boy, without saying a word, looked across at old Fleury, who, as already arranged, remarked quietly that the King "could not do better." Still without a word, the boy-King made a sign of assent. The aspirant to office thanked him, took the paper from la Vrillière, signed it, and went out.

Thus was inaugurated the government of the Marquise de Prie, for it was this mistress *en titre* of M. le Duc who actually ruled the kingdom for the ensuing year or two. The Duc de Bourbon was the name, the harpy, Madame de Prie, the power behind that name. Behind both was Fleury, the King's preceptor.

In the arrangements made with the new First Minister, the apparently benevolent seventy-year-old Bishop merely reserved for himself a seat in the Privy Council and the dispensation of ecclesiastical preferment. Who would, then, have dreamed that in three years' time that humble-mannered old man would have blossomed out into the position of practical Monarch, to rule absolutely for seventeen years, until he died at the age of ninety?

But such indeed was the case. Not for twenty years from the time that Bourbon signed the oath was Louis XV. able gleefully to exclaim, "Messieurs, here I am, then—at last—First Minister!" while the courtiers in turn shouted, "*Le cardinal est mort! Vive le roi!*" as though it were a new reign commencing.

By that time Louis XV., who succeeded his great-grandfather on September 1st, 1715, had been twenty-eight years upon a throne without becoming his own master. And during the thirty-one subsequent years of his reign it was the King's mistresses who really ruled, or mis-ruled, the State.

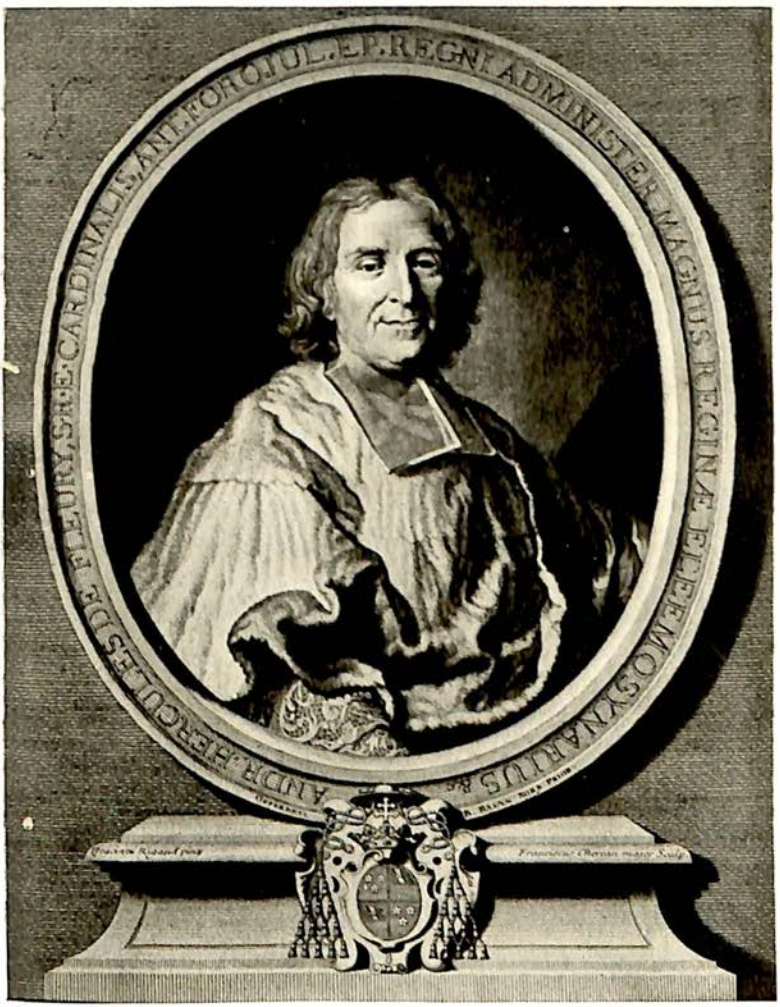
Those who remember the closing scenes of the life of Louis XIV. will recollect that one of the last actions of the Grand Monarque was to sign the appointment, suggested to him by his rabid Jesuit confessor le Tellier, of Fleury as preceptor and confessor to the little five-year-old boy about to succeed to the kingdom.

Louis "Dieudonné" then acted rather against his

will, for he did not care for Fleury; although, thanks to a handsome face and majestic presence, he had originally appointed him Almoner to the Queen. About six feet in height, the appearance of the Abbé Fleury was gentle rather than truculent when he first appeared at the Court, and such it had remained. From the position of Queen's Almoner he was promoted to that of King's Almoner, although he was only a deacon and apparently in no hurry to take further orders. It was not until he had entered his fortieth year that Fleury made up his mind to become priest. It is to be feared that in those days the future Cardinal was not more particular in his moral conduct than Harlay de Champvallon, the Archbishop of Paris, who became so notorious with his duchesses and grisettes that the populace hooted him in the streets. The celebrated Abbé Pucelles, the courageous mainstay of Jansenism in the Parliament of Paris, went indeed so far as to declare that he and Fleury, for the sake of economy, shared the same mistress. These reports came to the ears of the King, who, already annoyed at the publicity of the Archbishop's immoralities, punished his Almoner by making him a Bishop and sending him far away from Paris.

The bishopric of Fréjus, to which he was appointed, was the most unenviable see in the whole of France. Two hundred leagues from Paris, Fréjus was in a marsh whence, for fifteen long years, the only sounds of revelry which saluted the ears of the pleasure-loving prelate were the croakings of the frogs. He signed his letters "Bishop of Fréjus—by divine indignation."

Any prospects which he might have had of returning to the Court, the Bishop ruined for himself by his own indiscretion during the War of the Spanish Succession.



From an engraving after the picture by Rigaud.

CARDINAL FLEURY.

Prince Eugène and the Duke of Savoy having invaded Provence, the incautious prelate visited them in their camps and charmed them with his agreeable society. Until the year after the Peace of Utrecht Fleury remained thus in banishment and disgrace, when he threw himself into the arms of the Jesuits in the hope of obtaining their good graces. Nor were his hopes in vain: the Jesuits accepted him, with a proviso. This was that the Bishop of Fréjus should receive at their hands a very hard taskmaster, in the shape of the ruler of the Seminary Saint-Nicolas, the Père Pollet, as his confessor.

Under the auspices of this awful man, one of the savage and cruel despoilers of the Jansenist convent and cemetery of Port-Royal, Fleury floated back into favour; until Louis XIV., after the gangrene had already gained his limbs, signed his appointment to his great-grandson as preceptor and confessor.

In this position the Regent left him; but knowing the ignorance and indolence of the Bishop of Fréjus, the Duc d'Orléans gave him two able assistants for the education of the child-King. Another priest, also named Fleury, was made his *sous-précepteur*, while the Abbé Wittement, or Vitement, formerly reader to the Duc de Bourgogne and a very honest man, taught the King to read.

When, in August, 1722, the wilful boy-King, schooled by his governor, the Duc de Villeroi, commenced to show his impatience of control, by refusing a Jesuit as confessor, and cruelly, in his sullen temper, butchering his tame white doe, the Bishop played his cards well. Seeing that his Royal charge disliked constraint, he sent away the learned Fleury, author of the *Histoire ecclésiastique*; he also sent off the excellent Wittement.

Thus the Bishop of Fréjus remained alone with the

King, and, by allowing him to follow his own devices and not forcing him to talk, became absolutely necessary to the youth. It is true that, by way of keeping in with the Jesuits, the Bishop persuaded his charge to give the name of his confessor to a member of that order, the Père Linières, but it was merely a name. Fleury alone governed the young Louis in everything, and did so by doing nothing, never seeming to assert himself, either with the boy or with those in authority who might have become jealous had he pushed himself forward. Moreover, he taught the King absolutely nothing.

In the year 1722, after the Regent had seized the person of the insolent old Duc de Villeroi and sent him off to his estates for interfering between himself and the King, Fleury remained the master while seeming the slave. That he was the former was made manifest when, upon the death of the Regent, he again played his cards well by permitting the most powerful of the Princes of the Blood to assume the nominal dictatorship.

To have allowed the Duc de Chartres, the honest but inefficient son of Philippe d'Orléans, to have become First Minister would, from Fleury's point of view, have been a mistake. The Duc d'Orléans once said to his son, whose incompetence he realised, "You will never be anything but an honest man." This was true, and his honesty, which turned to devotion and Jansenism, ended up in semi-madness.

A Prince of Jansenistical principles would have helped Fleury little with the Jesuits or Rome, the persecutors of the Jansenists; while, again, the turbulent and jealous spirit of the Condés and Contis, the other Princes, would before long have made the position of the First Prince of the Blood impossible, and probably resulted in a civil war.

The Duc de Chartres—now Duc d'Orléans—was heir to the throne while the young Louis had no children, and was excessively jealous of his position as head of the Royal Family. This fact also would have rendered the post of Fleury far more difficult to maintain than by accepting, as he quietly did, the rule of the Condé—for a time. The Duc d'Orléans would have sought the support of the Jansenist faction, strong in the Parliament of Paris, against the Jesuits, the protectors of Fleury, and thus his Bishop's place would probably before long have been vacant.

With M. le Duc there was nothing of that sort to fear. He was no friend of the Duc de Noailles, no friend of the Jansenists or the Parliament; the Jesuits, Pollet and the rest, accordingly promised him their support. The Duc de Bourbon, of course, promised in return to obtain from Rome the Cardinal's hat for the Bishop of Fréjus. He promised, moreover, to work against and persecute the Jansenists, who still refused to accept the constitution of the Papal Bull *Unigenitus*. This Bull was framed in 1711 by Louis XIV. and his grandson the Duc de Bourgogne to crush the Jansenists, and furthermore it was forced by Louis and the Duc upon Clement XI., a semi-Jansenist Pope. Bourbon also promised to persecute the Protestants.

At Chantilly, the home of the Condés, irreligion reigned supreme, as it had reigned everywhere in France during the Regency, when indifference, led by the Regent and Cardinal Dubois, had been, fortunately for the Protestants, the order of the day. The Regent indeed had befriended the Protestants, and rescued many of their number from the galleys; while the unbelieving Cardinal Dubois only made a pretence of wishing to

persecute either Jansenist or Protestant for a short time, when agitating for his Cardinal's hat. That once obtained, all the old cruel traditions of the time of Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon had been completely forgotten and ignored.

It is not to be supposed, therefore, that the religious question was of more importance at Chantilly than it had been during the Regency. Madame de Prie was the friend of the ladies of the Condé family, all of them Princesses of more than light reputation. Madame la Duchesse the mother of the Duc de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Charolais and Mademoiselle de Clermont his sisters, his brother the Comte de Charolais, were all alike known for their immoral behaviour. All of these were the friends of Voltaire. The astute farmer-general Pâris-Duverney, who with his three brothers had come into great prominence during the Regency, had been selected by Madame de Prie as her right-hand man. He helped to make Voltaire's enormous fortune, by giving him a share in his traffic in provisions for the army and the State, while Madame de Prie caused the poet to be given a pension.

Things being thus at Chantilly, from the first M. le Duc did not back up the Jesuits, who were behind Fleury, in a whole-hearted manner. Thus although, at the instance of Lavergne de Tressan, Bishop of Nantes, who wished to be made a Cardinal, an old edict of persecution of the days of Louis XIV. was revived against the Protestants, M. le Duc took the sting out of it. He secretly removed the murderous article from the code which the clergy contrived to get him to promulgate—the clause by which every one found to be a Protestant might, for the crime of "relapse," be executed in some horrible

manner, burned or broken on the wheel. Nor did he press the demand for the Cardinal's hat for Fleury: on the contrary, he tried to block the matter. Regarding the persecution of the Jansenists he was lukewarm also, and demanded peace from Rome instead of war.

M. le Duc was the more careless in these matters because from the first he found that the Bishop of Fréjus was playing him false with the young King. While keeping entire control over the Monarch, Fleury also kept in his own hands the best part of the spoils of the State through that control. He reserved in a great measure the rewards, the power; moreover, as regards his influence with the boy-King, he held M. le Duc in a condition of fear as to how it might be exerted against him.

Madame de Prie did not, however, propose to remain in the future Cardinal's tutelage. From the first she determined to be Queen in the State, and, with the assistance of Pâris-Duverney, for a time she succeeded.

There was no money in the State coffers, and without money the old priest Fleury was powerless. Pâris-Duverney and his three brothers from Dauphiné, who but two years earlier had been the conquerors of the brilliant Scotsman John Law and his *Système*, always seemed to have the knack of obtaining money. The brothers Pâris were no common men; Duverney in particular, who lived to the age of eighty, filled a century with his activity. At one time the favourite of de Prie, he was, many years afterwards, the favourite of Pompadour, who called him familiarly "my old booby." Long before the days of de Prie, he and his brothers, mountaineers and inn-keepers in the passes of the Alps, had helped Louvois, the furious Minister of War, to pass an army

rapidly across those Alps. All the brothers had a wonderful knowledge of affairs, while Duverney, with a remarkable sense of order and precision, loved affairs for themselves more than for the money they could bring. During his career he handled many millions, but only left a moderate fortune. He never cared about honours or titles, and was content to be known, while under the Duc de Bourbon, as *Secrétaire des commandements de M. le Duc.*

Having been associated with the great financier Samuel Bernard, the brothers Pâris did all the rough work for him, provisioned army after army, always paying money down, and obtaining provisions when none else could find any. Upon one occasion they suddenly produced forty thousand horses at once for the Maréchal de Villars; moreover, they conducted him and provisioned him during his last splendid efforts upon the Rhine, which resulted in peace.

In the days of the Seven Years' War we shall find Pâris-Duverney, as an octogenarian, again in the field, as active as ever, and always a performer of miracles.

Such, then, was the man with whom Madame de Prie had associated herself. In her alliance with him she was strong; she found means to satisfy her ambition, and that greed which had enabled her, with M. le Duc and his family, to make at least fifty millions of livres, by dubious methods, out of John Law and his *Système* during the Regency.

Madame de Prie, daughter of Madame Pléneuf, an amiable lady with many lovers, became at an early age the wife of the Marquis de Prie, a starveling envoy at Turin to the Court of Victor Amadeus of Savoy, King of Sardinia. When she returned to Paris she was floated

by a well-known stock-jobbing lady, Madame de Verrue, who was of the ducal family de Luynes.

Madame de Verrue also had lived long in Italy, in Piedmont, where her husband had taken it in very bad part when she refused to become the mistress of the then Duke of Savoy, ruler of Piedmont. She at length gave way to the importunities of the Duke, and practically became Queen of the State, until, wearied out by the jealous tyranny of her Royal lover, she made her escape back to Paris and indulged in both unlimited pleasure and boundless speculations. Her hôtel became famous for its splendid picture-galleries, and especially for its collection of paintings by Rubens and Rembrandt, of whose work Madame de Verrue was one of the earliest admirers.

When the Marquise de Prie, then in the flower of her youthful beauty, returned, full of Italian charms and graces, from Turin, Madame de Verrue saw in the beautiful but depraved girl an object of speculation. She knew the young Duc de Bourbon to be tired of Madame de Nesle, by whom he had two daughters, one acknowledged and legitimatised, the other to become one of the several sisters who became the King's first mistresses. She therefore planned the celebrated meetings at the masked balls in which Madame de Prie captivated M. le Duc even before he succeeded in seeing her face.

With the possession of Madame de Prie, fortune came rolling in upon the Condé family. Law's shares began to rise from that moment. She and the Condés had the State secrets from the Regent, and knew how to work the rise and how to take advantage of it, how unscrupulously need not be detailed here.

In her nature the Marquise de Prie was ferocious,

she was a tiger-cat, and proved it by her hatred of Orléans and the way in which she pursued her good-natured, good-looking mother, whom she envied her celebrated lovers, among whom were Leblanc and Belle-Isle. Libertine with all the libertinism of a Borgia, the Marquise de Prie had about her nothing *bourgeoise* like Madame de Pompadour, nothing that was vulgar after the fashion of Madame du Barry. She bewitched the Duc de Bourbon at the same time that, with the touch of her magic wand, she caused to flow for his benefit the golden river of Pactolus.

The most trustworthy and honest of all the chroniclers of the time of Louis XV. was undoubtedly the Marquis René Louis de Voyer d'Argenson, eldest son of the celebrated Police-Lieutenant Marc René, and elder brother of the Minister of War, Comte Marc Pierre. Both the brothers were born in the same year, 1696, and, fortunately for the Marquis, he died in 1757, a few days before the disgrace of his brother, owing to the wiles of Madame de Pompadour. Besides his journal, which was continued to within a few days of his death, the Marquis left behind him, in his *Loisirs d'un ministre*, voluminous notes amounting in many cases to veritable essays upon every man and woman of importance of his day, from the King downwards. Often he returns, in subsequent years, to add additional notes or to modify previous impressions of the same personages as he follows their careers. Throughout his memoirs it is constantly forced upon the mind of the reader that their writer was indeed that which he claimed to be—an honest man!

At the time of his dismissal from the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, for the mere crime of not being enough of a courtier, posterity, reading

his temperate remarks, shares with the Marquis himself his patriotic grief that the King, whose failings he always attributes to his evil surroundings, had not continued to keep him in office. How much would not the world have been spared had his counsels but prevailed. For although he still remained a Minister, as a member of the Council, the Marquis d'Argenson never again received a portfolio, although his scheming brother the Comte, whose character, without malevolence, he often dissects, gradually increased in power and importance, owing to the absence of those very qualities of honesty by which the Marquis stands forth alone in the Court of Louis XV. In reading his concluding pages, we do so with the greatest regret that he should not have lived to continue his diary until the close of the Seven Years' War, to have given to posterity his views upon the dismemberment of Poland. However, we must be thankful that he left us so much that we feel can be absolutely relied upon. He remarks upon Madame de Prie as follows :

" It was in the winter of 1719 that Madame de Prie returned to Paris from Turin, where her husband was Ambassador. I often met her in the house of a lady,* one of her cousins.

" I do not think that there has ever existed a more celestial creature than Madame de Prie. She was the real flower of the sweet-pea. A charming face, and even more graces than beauty, wit lively and acute, genius, ambition, giddiness, and nevertheless a supreme presence

* This lady, whom the worthy d'Argenson often speaks of as Madame de G., was his mistress, but historians have not been successful in discovering the identity of one to whom he continued to show such fidelity.

of mind, an extreme indifference in her choices, and with it all the most decent air in the world.

"Well, she governed France throughout two years, and one was able to judge her; but to say that she governed it well is another matter!

"At the depth there reigned the greatest disorder in her conduct; also she died partly from the results of her libertinage, partly from rage at seeing her credit overturned. During her prosperity she maintained an affection for each of her lovers, and did her best to be useful to them.*

"I saw her intimately at the period of her great beauty. Her fascination was great, but, whether from prudence or from chance, I resisted it, and do not regret having done so, however much my conduct may have damaged me with her.

"Madame de Prie arrived ruined from the Embassy, and set at once about repairing her fortunes. She would not have succeeded badly had it not been for the extreme disorder in which she lived.

"M. le Duc was wildly taken with her. Mesdames de Verrue and de Saissac gave her to him. The bargain was soon made. I have known a good many of the details of this liaison and its origin. I knew their customs, their goings to the opera-balls, their grey chariot *de bonne fortune*, which had outwardly the appearance of a common *fiacre*, but was internally of an extreme magnificence. Madame de G. and I accompanied them everywhere, and I was proud to be seen walking about arm-in-arm with a Prince of the Blood.

* Madame de Prie died of poison, self-administered, at the age of twenty-nine. She had been exiled to the country for fifteen months when her death took place on October 6th, 1727.

"Nevertheless, I almost ceased to see him later on, and when he became First Minister. I am inclined, however, to think him an honest man, above all, having the desire to be one, although for that matter restricted and narrow-minded.

"M. le Duc became jealous of the Marquis d'Alincourt (the grandson of the Maréchal-Duc de Villeroi), and in consequence Madame de Prie had to give the Marquis his *congé* at an opera-ball. There was great irritation about it, but all that is very young and childish.

"M. le Duc d'Orléans died, and M. le Duc became First Minister, or rather he only had the title of it. La de Prie and Du Vernay [Pâris-Duverney] held him in bondage.

"Madame de Prie did not like my brother; she took away from him his post of Lieutenant de Police. But he was a Councillor of State. At the same time I gave up my Intendance of Valenciennes, which only ruined me without being good for anything. I was reproached for this step as a want of attachment to M. le Duc, and an occasion for making me feel it soon came. I had asked for an intendancy, and there were two vacant. La de Prie cut me out; she preferred M. de Harlay, who had Strasbourg, and M. d'Angervilliers, who got Paris. She procured M. le Duc Madame d'Egmont for his amusement as soon as she perceived that her own charms ceased to have the same empire over that Prince. In fact, she was getting thin while one looked at her, her bones showed through the skin.

"She it was who made the Queen, *just as I would make of my lackey a valet de chambre.* That was a pity! Nevertheless, her credit fell against M. de Fréjus [Fleury], whom she wished to separate from the King, but who

sat tight and laughed at her. From disappointment, she became hideous and haughty with every one, would listen to no reasonable advice.

"Seeing that I was becoming importunate, I seldom appeared before her; not that I feared her though, on account of our old acquaintance, and therefore did not neglect to tell her a few home truths when I saw her, at which she only laughed. She was disgraced at the same time as M. le Duc. Her husband, M. de Prie, asked everybody with a comic affectation, 'But what have my wife and M. le Duc to do in common?'

"She died in the saddest manner at Courbe-Epine. I have seen M. le Duc from time to time since then, but not with the old familiarity.

"Madame de Prie was absolutely determined to receive me alone. As for me, I avoided these interviews like another Joseph with Potiphar's wife. Never was her door closed to me. One day when I went I was ushered in to her at her toilette—she was washing herself. I wished to retire, but she made me remain.

"'At all events, madame,' I then said, 'let me take the first-fruits of such cleanliness.' As a matter of fact, I kissed her, and heartily too, although it was but by chance that I found myself there. Fortunately some one came, for I really truly loved Madame de G., and it went against the grain that, from pure libertinage, her cousin should make advances to me and fail towards M. le Duc, who was so good to her. She was uncommonly pretty then, although she had commenced to fine down. I went off on the morrow to Valenciennes, without taking advantage in any way of her good will towards me."

Such, then, is a portrait of the woman who ruled the

State, and whose first measure was to send back the young Infanta from Versailles to Spain.

This young daughter of Philip V., uncle of Louis XV., first Bourbon King of Spain, and husband of Elizabeth Farnese of Parma, had come to France as a mere child of four or five, a year or two earlier, amid a great flourish of trumpets. The projected alliance had been the work of Cardinal Dubois and the Regent, who, by selecting such a very young child to be affianced to the young King, had hoped for a long time to keep the power in France in their own hands. Since there could naturally be no heir to the King, moreover, the boy being in feeble health, there was in the event of his death every prbspect that the Duc d'Orléans, the direct heir, would himself succeed to the crown.

Two of the Regent's daughters were at about the same time sent to Spain. Mademoiselle de Montpensier, the elder, married Don Luis, Prince of the Asturias, and was for eight months Queen of Spain, Philip V. having temporarily abdicated until King Luis his son died of smallpox.

Mademoiselle de Beaujolais, the younger daughter, was sent in exchange for the Infanta, who came to Versailles, and was intended for Don Carlos, the younger half-brother of Luis. She was, however, sent back to France when Madame de Prie returned the Infanta. This was a step which caused the greatest fury at the Court of Spain, and especially in the heart of Elizabeth Farnese, the second wife of the French King of Spain. She, although but a beggarly Princess from the infinitesimal Court of Parma, was perhaps the most ambitious Queen who ever sat upon an European throne. Ruling her husband, her manœuvres in pursuit of this ambition

frequently drenched all Europe in blood. Later on she procured the eldest daughter of Louis XV. for Don Philip, who was the second son of the Parmesan Princess, and eventually obtained the Principality of Parma.

CHAPTER II

How a Queen was Made

1725

THE inauguration of the reign of the Marquise de Prie was marked by the bitterness between the houses of Orléans and Condé. In this matter Madame de Prie was as much Condé as her princely lover the First Minister and all his female relations. Of these his mother, Madame la Duchesse, was the most bitter, although, an illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV. by Madame de Montespan, she was sister to the Dowager Duchesse d'Orléans, widow of the late Regent.

The Regent was the son of Philippe d'Orléans the only brother of Louis XIV., and had, greatly against his will, married Mademoiselle de Blois, the youngest of that King's illegitimate daughters. She, however, with her brothers, the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, as well as her two sisters, had been publicly legitimatised and declared Royal with the rights of Royalty. During the Regency the Duc d'Orléans, at the instance of the Condé faction and to preserve himself from the plottings with Spain of the Duc du Maine, had taken away these Royal rights from Montespan's children, including his own wife and the Duchesse de Bourbon, who had married the head of the Condé family. A single exception,

however, was made in favour of the Comte de Touloues, for his lifetime only, since he was harmless and did not intrigue against his cousin the Regent.

The Comte de Toulouse married an attractive widow, whose relations with the young King were at different times of a varied nature, which caused considerable comment during the few years after the death of the Regent, as will be seen later. She was the widow of the Duc d'Antin, by whom she had two sons, the Duc d'Epernon and the Marquis d'Antin. Her name before marriage was Marie Victoire de Noailles, she being the sister of the Maréchal-Duc de Noailles. By the Comte de Toulouse she had one son, who was given the title of Duc de Penthièvre. This title had been borne by several Princes of the legitimatised house of Vendôme, descendants of Henri IV. and Gabrielle d'Estrées, celebrated as *la belle Gabrielle* in the song which the gallant Henri de Navarre composed about his beloved mistress.

While maintaining, as Ministers, la Vrillière, Fleuriau d'Aménonville, the Comte de Morville, Breteuil, and Dodun, all mediocre nominees of the late Duc d'Orléans, Madame de Prie and M. le Duc were not so complaisant where other friends of the Orléans family were concerned.

They commenced by, in as far as possible, making a clean sweep of Versailles. From the numerous sets of apartments in that château was first hunted out the brave Comte de Belle-Isle, who with his friend and colleague the able Minister of War, Leblanc, had already experienced the vengeance of "la" Prie and M. le Duc before the deaths of Cardinal Dubois and the Regent. Their real crime had been that of being among the beloved of Madame Pléneuf, the mother of M. le Duc's

favourite. What they were pursued for, although the charge was disproved before the Parliament, was pilfering the chest of the War Office. After Belle-Isle, went the Marquis de Simiane and all the *roués*, those companions of pleasure and debauch of the late Regent. While thus in one way striving to cause the ruin of the party of Orléans, by banishing its adherents from the Court, in another way it was sought to be occasioned by the elevation of its enemies to lucrative posts, which M. le Duc sold and gave the proceeds to Madame de Prie.

The cause of this hatred between the allied families of Condé and Orléans, both of the Blood-Royal, was undoubtedly the haughty attitude and pretensions of the Orléans themselves. M. le Duc declared that it was his project "to humiliate" the latter, as he regarded their pretensions as "enormous, exorbitant."

The young Duc de Chartres became Duc d'Orléans on the death of the Regent, and at once comported himself in a haughty manner, in no way after the fashion of his good-natured, easy-going father. Occupying now the position of First Prince of the Blood, he declared that, if in the affairs of the State M. le Duc enjoyed the power of First Minister, his own rank constituted him his cousin's superior. He added that he himself was alone pre-eminent in the rank of Prince of the Blood of France, and that, as heir to the throne, he intended to be treated with proper respect by one whom he would teach that he was only the Minister.

His mother, the Duchesse d'Orléans, a woman of such a disagreeable nature that her husband, against whose interests she had plotted, always called her Madame Satan, was more haughty even than her son. While backing up Leblanc and trying to restore him to office,

she refused to accept of any favours from "the Minister," insisting upon her rights from the young King himself. Thus when the new distribution of apartments was made at Versailles, since this distribution was made by the Duc de Bourbon, the Duchesse declined to accept those which her son desired, making him go to the King in person to demand apartments befitting his rank.

The war was carried on by Madame de Prie's dismissal from the Police-Lieutenantcy of the Comte d'Argenson. It was a place of great importance, since by it were held all the secrets of Paris, especially the handling of the letters in the post department, which were opened, their contents copied, and then resealed and forwarded. Instead of this friend of the Orléans family, who was for long its *chancelier*, a relation of "la" Prie's, named d'Omberval, was made Police-Lieutenant, by whose agency the ruling Marquise was soon able to know all that was taking place.

About this time the young Duc d'Orléans thought of taking a wife, and he fixed his affections upon a Princesse of the Blood—Louise Adélaïde, Mademoiselle de la Roche-sur-Yon. She was the daughter of François, Prince de Conti, and her mother was a Condé. To her his mother objected, upon the grounds that the young lady was "haughty, quarrelsome, and above all very libertine."

That the Duchesse d'Orléans had right upon her side in objecting to the match with Mademoiselle de la Roche-sur-Yon is apparent from the remarks of the Marquis d'Argenson concerning that lady, when she died unmarried in 1750, at the age of fifty-four. "C'était une bonne princesse, et qui laisse beaucoup de

bâtards." It has been said of her that her blood was too rich !

Failing to obtain this *bonne princesse*, the Duc d'Orléans had to search elsewhere, when, oddly enough, in spite of the internecine warfare raging between the families, the Duchesse d'Orléans applied to the Duchesse de Bourbon for a young sister of M. le Duc—Mademoiselle de Vermandois.

This demand was to court a refusal, especially as Madame la Duchesse was secretly aspiring to marry that young lady to the fourteen-year-old King. She offered instead Mademoiselle de Sens, who was declined ; while the Duchesse d'Orléans began to search the *Almanach-royal* for a suitable Princesse elsewhere.

When at length she fixed upon the Princess of Baden-Baden, M. le Duc contrived to put all sorts of obstacles in the way, to prevent the demand being made with the proper ceremony comporting with the Royal rank of the Duc d'Orléans. In fact, every petty means which his mind or the ingenuity of his mistress could invent was employed to reduce the grandeur of the house of Orléans. Notwithstanding these tactics, the First Minister had at length to give way, when the demand for the hand of the Princess was made in the name of the King.

It was, however, the Marquis de Matignon, an enemy of the Orléans family, who was entrusted with the duty, and he was instructed to carry it out in an unbefitting manner. Nevertheless, the marriage took place.

This Marquis de Matignon, formerly Comte de Gacé, was he who fought the memorable duel in the street with his comrade in debauch, the young Duc de Richelieu. The mutual dissipations in which these nobles

were indulging with some of the highest ladies in the land gave rise to the quarrel, which took place at an opera-ball, when the young men went outside and fought it out in the presence of numerous well-known persons in their ball attire. Gacé then received three wounds, while Richelieu was run through the body.

The Parliament of Paris insisted, in spite of the Regent, in imprisoning both in the Bastille, but both swore vigorously that there had been no duel. Moreover, none of the witnesses had seen anything! When, after some time, their bodies were ordered to be examined for wounds, they had covered these with taffeta and had them skilfully painted. Thus the judges observed nothing, and the two nobles were released, after embracing each other heartily and dining together with the Governor of the Bastille.

Although at the time of these quarrels between the two princely families the boy-King was exceedingly handsome, he was in delicate health. Moreover, he occasionally had severe, if short, illnesses. These made M. le Duc excessively anxious lest he should die and the kingdom pass to the Duc d'Orléans. He was desirous, therefore, to marry the youth to a lady of an age capable of having an heir, and for this reason it was that the seven-year-old Infanta was suddenly sent back to Spain, at the risk of a war with that Power, whose troops were, indeed, ordered to make some incursions across the Pyrenees.

The First Minister had further cause for anxiety in the policy of the Bishop of Fréjus, which consisted in making the boy as effeminate as possible. He wished to keep all ideas of the sex out of the King's head, and for that purpose allowed him to be surrounded by several

young companions of execrable habits. Already, two years earlier, the Regent had violently removed from Versailles several grandsons and a young granddaughter by marriage of the old Duc de Villeroi on account of their bad example to the King; the priestly preceptor was, however, once more closing his eyes and conniving at what he knew to be utterly wrong.

The leaders of this gang of effeminate young wretches were the Duc d'Epernon, son of Madame de Toulouse, who lived in apartments just below the King at Versailles; the boy-Duc de Gesvres, who did woman's work, such as tapestry and knitting, all his life, and who was always with the King; and la Tremouille, two years older than the others, the worst of the three. There was likewise the young Comte de Maurepas, a Secretary of State at fifteen, and afterwards an important personage in the State. He was witty, clever, fond of bon-mots, epigrams, and charades from early youth. Although looked down upon by the others on account of his inferiority of birth, being but the grandson of the Chancelier Pontchartrain, he led the band and encouraged them in iniquity; he was, moreover, a year or two the senior of Tremouille.

Madame de Toulouse, who, although still young and remarkably well preserved, at this time played the mother to the young King, did all she could to foster the intimacy of her son with him; in short, she backed up the Bishop in allowing his Royal charge to run wild with the girlish boys who set him against all women, and made him vow that he would never marry, as did the others.

Owing to disorder on a large scale which was taking place in Paris at this time in the house of a certain des Chauffours (who was eventually burned), the public, who

loved their young King, became alarmed for his moral welfare.

While the still youthful Voltaire was taking up his pen to flagellate, in *La Courcillonade* and the *Curé de Chantilly*, those vicious persons whose example these young *mignons* but imitated, M. le Duc and Madame de Prie were endeavouring to institute vigorous police measures against them, in which they were assisted by Pâris-Duverney. It would take many pages to follow the ramifications of the affair, in which, in the end, the influence of Versailles proved too strong for the really laudable efforts of Madame de Prie. This, by-the-bye, was owing to the fact that Hérault, whom she appointed Lieutenant de Police instead of her cousin d'Omberval, proved untrue to her and went over to the other side. It may be well to mention that the celebrated beating which Voltaire received at the hands of the servants of the Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot came out of the same business, as was also his imprisonment in the Bastille to prevent him fighting a duel with de Rohan, and his subsequent departure for England. The Chevalier, formerly a friend of the Marquise de Prie, like Hérault, had changed sides.

Although unsuccessful in the sweeping reforms of the public morals which they sought to carry out in Paris, at Versailles Madame de Prie and M. le Duc contrived to triumph over the old Bishop Fleury, whose studied indulgence amounted to iniquity. By it, indeed, he kept a hold over the young King all the rest of his life. The excellent Abbé Wittement said some years later, "There exists a certain indissoluble bond between the King and the Cardinal from which it results that His Majesty could never send him away, however much he might wish to." And he never did send him away,

although men and events all around him proved more and more every day how necessary it was that he should do so.

The Duc and his mistress resolved to marry young la Tremouille by force—which they did; they also resolved to marry the King, in spite of Fleury. Now we shall see the truth of d'Argenson's words, "Madame de Prie made the Queen of France as I would make my lackey *valet de chambre.*"

She and her partner at the head of affairs well realised that to marry the King had this much to recommend it: for not only would it do away with the Court influences at Versailles, but it would be the greatest blow that could be aimed at the Palais-Royal, since it would render the Orléans family furious. The scheme was therefore all the more readily decided on.

While looking about for a wife for the young King, the Duc did him a good turn. An ardent sportsman himself, he commenced to make a sportsman of Louis, and to take him out to his parties of the chase. In later years the only healthy occupation of the King's life was hunting and shooting, and at this critical period of his youth these pursuits made a man of the badly brought-up boy, and his health was soon greatly improved by the outdoor exercise.

It was natural, while looking about for a wife for the King, that the Duc de Bourbon should be of the same opinion as Madame la Duchesse in considering that he could not do better than give him his own young sister, Mademoiselle de Vermandois. By nature this young lady, who was still being educated in a convent, was haughty, *spirituelle*, and given to speaking out her mind. She took good care to let all the other pupils in the

convent understand her superior rank, and exacted from them humble respect to herself. In appearance she was remarkably good-looking and well formed for her age.

While Madame de Prie was of the same mind as her lover in considering the Duc's young sister as a suitable match for the King, she determined not to decide on accepting the young Princesse without in a personal interview deciding upon her adaptability for the magnificent position to which she proposed to raise her.

With this object in view, and especially to see if she would be likely to allow herself to be ruled, the Marquise formed a plan for finding out the true nature of Mademoiselle de Vermandois. Disguising herself and taking a titled name not her own, she proceeded to Tours, where the convent was situated. Having armed herself with letters from M. le Duc to his sister, she readily gained access to the young member of the house of Condé.

Chatting with the girl in a lively manner and giving her all the Court news, she managed to bring the conversation round to herself, asking Mademoiselle de Vermandois if she had heard of the Marquise de Prie, and what she thought about her.

The young Princesse was not long in giving her opinion ; she thought all the horrors possible of Madame de Prie—and said so.

The Marquise listened, in no wise disconcerted, and drew her on with an approving smile while she said that " Well did she know that wicked woman ; they talked of nothing else in the convent, and in a horrible manner. It was very annoying that her brother had about him a disgusting creature like that, whose very name made him hated by the whole of France." The young scholar

continued for a long time in this strain, ending up by saying that it was greatly to be desired that her brother's friends should contrive to remove such an abandoned person from his society.

Madame de Prie had now heard enough; moreover, owing to the increasing animation of Mademoiselle de Vermandois, she commenced to feel that she herself was losing her temper. Rising hurriedly to leave, she remarked aloud, contemptuously, "Va! tu ne seras point reine de France," and thereupon left the incautious young Princesse to her reflections.

Upon returning to Versailles Madame de Prie did not fall into the error of abusing his sister to her lover. Far too clever to adopt such a course, she acted in an entirely contrary manner, declaring to M. le Duc that his sister possessed all the qualities required in a Queen of France.

Having thus eliminated the chance of any odium falling upon herself should the match not come off, Madame de Prie repaired to Pâris-Duverney, who possessed the Duc's full confidence and ruled him in great matters of State. To him she pointed out that if Mademoiselle de Vermandois should become Queen, he would, instead of the one master whom he now had, have five. These she enumerated: they were the King, the Queen, M. le Duc, his mother, Madame la Duchesse, and M. de Lassay.

This Marquis de Lassay was an old fop whom the mother of the First Minister was not ashamed to be seen about with everywhere, and who exercised a great deal too much influence upon Madame la Duchesse. Perhaps fortunately for her, she had never prided herself sufficiently upon her reputation to mind what was said about

her and the bitter-tongued old man to whom eventually she was supposed to have been married in secret.

Pâris-Duverney was not long in acting upon the hint given to him by the cunning Marquise; and it bore such good fruit that before long M. le Duc was telling everybody that if the marriage with his sister was *une affaire manquée*, it was by no means the fault of Madame de Prie, as that lady had strongly recommended the alliance.

The worthy couple experienced a good deal of difficulty in finding just the sort of wife they wanted for the young King, which was one who would be virtuous and at the same time docile enough to do what she was told. For one cause or another, all the marriageable Princesses seemed unsuitable, or, if suitable, were refused to them.

Among the former class was Elizabeth, Princess of Russia, whom her mother, Catherine I., widow of Peter the Great, very readily offered. The mother's character and low birth, however, were an obstacle, to which was added the equivocal reputation of the Princess herself; she was therefore declined with thanks.

With George I., the German King of England, the First Minister had continued the traditions of Cardinal Dubois, which were those of a close friendship, cemented all the closer from the fact that the annual million of livres which England had given to Dubois were continued to Madame de Prie. When, therefore, the King of England was asked for one of his grand-daughters for the King of France, he made no personal objection; on the contrary, expressed himself flattered. But he pointed out that the people of England would not stand the proviso that an English Princess should change her religion.

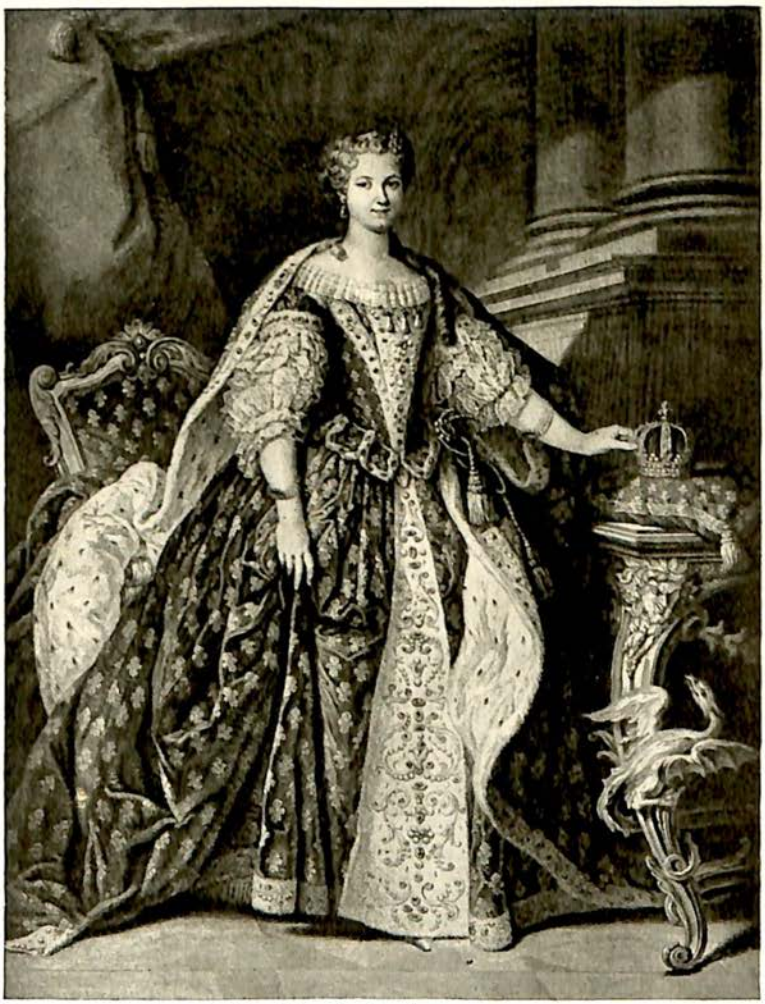
At length some one thought of a very humble

personage who yet had some claims to the rank of a Royal Princess, and suggested her to Madame de Prie. It is probable that Pâris-Duverney was the real originator of the suggestion, although de Rohan, Bishop of Strasbourg, has been named as responsible for it. It was remembered that, living humbly in a remote corner of Alsace upon the bounty of the King of France, there existed a worthy gentleman who once had been a King of Poland, and that he had a daughter. Duverney, at all events, had formerly lent money at Wurtemburg to Stanislas Lesczynski, and knew him. He was now at Weissemburg with his family. His career had been a varied one already, and was to be more so before he died. Son of Raphael Lesczynski, Palatine of Posen and Treasurer of Poland, Stanislas had in his youth been appointed arch-butler to the crown by Augustus II. When Charles XII. of Sweden conquered Augustus in 1704, he took a fancy to Stanislas, and helped to get him elected to the throne by the Diet at Warsaw. After Charles was defeated at Pultawa in 1709, Stanislas felt his position insecure, and had definitely to abandon the crown and fly to Pomerania when Augustus came back in 1712. He then abdicated; but being treacherously taken prisoner by the Hospodar of Moldavia, he was sold by him to the Turks, who kept Stanislas until 1714. The exiled King then going to Sweden, Charles XII. made Stanislas the Governor of Deux-Ponts. Five years later Charles died. Bereft at once of his protector and his large family estates in Poland, Lesczynski found a refuge under Philippe d'Orléans, the Regent, who gave him an allowance and permission to live at Weissemburg, with his only daughter Marie Lesczynska. He had been trying hard for some years past to marry Marie

to some Prince, but in vain, and at length had fallen so low in his demands for his penniless daughter that he had been ready to unite her to a simple colonel, the Comte d'Estrées. This marriage, however, fell through, as the Regent declined to make the Comte a duc and peer of France.

Madame de Prie learned enough about Marie to know that she was twenty-two years old, was virtuous, gentle and simple in manner, and that she was not handsome. She was convinced that her poverty would make her submissive to her will. When the messenger arrived with the demand for his daughter's hand for the King of France, it is said that Stanislas Lesczynski fell upon Marie Lesczynska's neck in a swoon. On recovery from his fainting fit, the ex-King of Poland remarked, "Never have I wished again to sit upon a throne save for the purpose of establishing my beloved daughter."

Neither father nor daughter could believe the good news to be true; but hard upon the heels of her messenger arrived Madame de Prie herself at Strasbourg, to indoctrinate the simple Polish maiden with the duties that she was contracting towards the First Minister. The Marquise had not only brought advice, she came with her hands full of presents from M. le Duc, and other and more womanly ones from herself. Having learned that the Queen of her selection was wanting in underclothing, the favourite profited by the extreme poverty of Stanislas to take his daughter a liberal supply of these necessary articles, and especially stockings of the finest quality. Poor Marie Lesczynska, accustomed to the direst poverty, was dazzled. She exclaimed simply, "Never in my life have I seen so much riches!"



From an engraving after the picture by Vanloo.

MARIE LESCZYNSKA, PRINCESS OF POLAND AND QUEEN OF FRANCE.

CHAPTER III

How a Queen was Deposed

1725—1726

THE old saying of "Happy is the bride that the sun shines upon" could hardly have been applied to Marie Lesczynska. From the moment that she left Alsace to the time that she arrived in Paris it rained in torrents. In spite of the fact that all the horses of the farmers were impressed to draw the coaches of the *cortège*, in spite, too, of the impressment of thousands of miserable peasants to work upon the roads by forced labour in every province, the carriages were with the greatest difficulty got through. They were, indeed, frequently floating. She, however, duly arrived at length, and was married to the handsome young King on September 5th, 1725. He was then fifteen and a half years old, and, from the contemporary reports of Bachelier, his celebrated *valet de chambre*, and others, appears at first to have persisted in following the advice of the now married la Tremouille, and treated his spouse more as a sister than a wife. La Tremouille, who was married to the daughter of the Duc de Bouillon, in spite of the threats of his father-in-law, insisted for eight years in following a similar line of conduct and neglecting his amiable bride.

The misery and famine brought about by the heavy

rains of the year of the marriage were all visited upon the head of Pâris-Duverney. Since he had been following the tenets of the celebrated engineer Vauban, and endeavouring to tax nobles and clergy as well as the peasants and *bourgeoïsie*, the members of the privileged classes stirred up even the ignorant lower orders against Duverney. His tax-collectors were received everywhere with a pitchfork. To wind up his splendid military career, Vauban's book was publicly burned by the hangman, and he died in disgrace in 1707. In such guise had Louis XIV. treated his faithful servant, who brought him so much military glory at sieges at which the Monarch was present in person.

To touch the pockets of the nobility or the clergy was still a dangerous operation under Louis XV., and when the fall arrived of the Duc de Bourbon and the Marquise de Prie, Duverney was rewarded for his courageous attempts with eighteen months in the Bastille.

In the meantime, however, the trio proceeded gaily, suppressing most of the pensions conferred upon his favourites by the late Regent, and many also which dated from the time of Louis XIV. By this means there was some money for the State and a good deal for M. le Duc, his family, and his mistress.

The hard laws of the energetic Duverney, his wholesale suppression of the millions of beggars whom he forced to work or imprisoned, his prying into the private affairs and the incomes of the *noblesse* and clergy, soon made the ruling couple excessively unpopular. Especially did the Jesuit party—which was also the party of Versailles and Fleury—rage. Their meeting-place was the salon of the infamous Madame de Tencin, the ex-nun who had been mistress to Dubois, and was, by the poet Destouches,

the mother of the celebrated d'Alembert, whom she abandoned at his birth upon the steps of a church.

This late go-between of the Regent's amours and stage-manageress of his shameful orgies lived in a semi-marital fashion with her equally shameless brother, soon now to become Cardinal de Tencin. While still Abbé this disgrace to the Church had, by blackmailing the old Cardinal Conti after his election to the papal chair as Innocent XIII., compelled him to give the Cardinal's hat to the dissolute Dubois. He had now been negotiating successfully with Benedict XIII. for the same distinction for the Bishop of Fréjus and himself. The credit of the two Tencins stood very high with Fleury and the Jesuits—and through Fleury with the young King. In every manner in their power they sought to subvert the authority of M. le Duc and Madame de Prie, who soon found themselves without any support save in the Queen whom they had made, and she was almost a nonentity.

Far from marriage having served to regulate the King in the matter of his choice of friends, it had but served to cynically emancipate him. At his *levers*, at his *couchers*, his friends had returned, including the scandalous young Duchesse de Retz, whom the Regent had banished from Court with those *polissons* the grandsons of Villeroi. She was now a widow, and gained in favour. The girlish Gesvres was also to be seen back once more, doing his tapestry work in the Royal apartments.

As for the newly married Queen, she was quite neglected and left out in the cold, to the society of the ladies-of-honour whom de Prie had selected for her, and upon none of whom, as yet, the boy-King had deigned to cast his eyes.

Seeking to find in others that which she did not possess herself, Madame de Prie had undertaken a difficult task when she endeavoured to procure for the Queen's household none but ladies whose names the breath of scandal had not sullied. The Abbé de Soulavie tells us that "After having greatly searched it was found that Madame la Maréchale de Boufflers possessed the qualities and virtue required for a lady-of-honour, whence one may infer to what corruption the sex had abandoned itself, and how much the Regency had favoured scandalous libertinage. It was for these reasons that the Comtesse de Mailly, the eldest daughter of the Marquise de Nesles, was chosen for Lady of the Robes. She was neither capricious, intriguing, nor ambitious, and her character had in it much that could accommodate itself to that of the Queen, which it much resembled. Madame de Mailly had in addition qualities of the heart; with an equable temperament, she was true to her friendships, and was known for her probity and modesty.

"Massillon says that 'One did not look so closely into the character of the twelve ladies of the Palace, for it would have been too difficult to fill these places with ladies of irreproachable manners. M. le Duc was obliged to recompense Madame de Prie and Madame d'Egmont, whose gallantry was known to all the Court, and some others whom in his moments of distraction had not proved cruel to him.'

"Among other ladies were to be distinguished Madame de Nesle and Madame de Gontaut, who had for the Duc de Richelieu, among others, sentiments less interested but more lively and natural than those of Madame de Prie for M. le Duc. While Madame de Nesle had wit and

courage, activity and energy, in her passions, Madame de Gontaut, on the other hand, possessed more sensibility and reflection." It will be remembered that although for years the mistress of M. le Duc, the Marquise de Nesle during the Regency fought a duel with pistols with Madame de Polignac for the Duc de Richelieu, and while lying bathed in blood as a result of a bullet received just above the breast, that she loudly proclaimed that fickle noble to the bystanders as "the eldest son of Venus and Mars, for whom I am ready to shed my blood to the last drop." Her courage was, therefore, certainly less to be questioned than her qualities of reflection.

The manners and morals of the ladies of the Palace of the Queen were, as may be judged from those already named, sufficiently varied. Among the others were the Duchesses de Tallard, de Béthune, and d'Epernon, the young and beautiful Maréchale de Villars, for whose *beaux yeux* Voltaire sighed a whole year in vain, and Mesdames de Chalais, de Rupelmonde, de Mérode, and de Matignon, of whom it was said that they were suspected of some gallantries, but less bold and less talked about than those of the other ladies.

To this charming bevy of ladies, then, was the Queen relegated, and it must be conceded that if among such a collection of unprincipled women she, while neglected by the King, remained good and pure, it was owing alone to her own innate virtue. Virtuous and religious, indeed, this ill-treated woman remained all her life.

For the officers of her chapel she was compelled to accept Fleury as her Grand Almoner, while Bishop Tavannes, afterwards a Cardinal and Archbishop of Rouen, was appointed her First Almoner.

While Fleury, burning with the desire to govern the State and to get rid of M. le Duc and Madame de Prie, was plotting with the Tencins and the Jesuits their enemies, M. le Duc tried to appease the old Bishop of Fréjus by leaving in his hands everything of whatsoever kind to do with the distribution of favours in the Church. Fleury, however, was not by any means contented, M. le Duc and the Marquise therefore laid a plot to get rid of him.

A great coup was attempted in December, 1725, by which it was proposed to separate the prelate from his pupil. It was Madame de Prie, inspired by Duverney, who suggested to M. le Duc that he should get the King to speak to him alone about State affairs, carefully keeping him apart from the Bishop, who invariably contrived to be present. By degrees, it was thought, the King would learn to do without this constant presence of his preceptor, and eventually send him away altogether.

To succeed, the Queen's assistance was required and readily granted. M. le Duc, on December 17th, 1725, was with the Queen, who sent to ask the King to come to her (he was, as usual, with Fleury). Upon his arrival the doors were closed, and the Queen and the Duc de Bourbon kept them so until eleven o'clock.

At half-past eight Fleury, tired of waiting for the King, left Versailles and went off to a convent at Issy. He had played the same trick once before with great success during the Regency. Then, while the King moaned and groaned and refused to eat or sleep, Fleury remained concealed for a day or two, to the great discomfiture of the Regent, who did not know how to pacify the boy. It was upon the occasion that the Maréchal de Villeroi was sent away. Fleury had promised the King's

Governor that he would also leave the Court and remain absent if anything should happen to him. He did not, however, keep his compact with Villeroi, but allowed himself to be found and brought back in triumph to his charge, while the Maréchal was kept in exile by the Regent.

Remembering the King's tears upon the former occasion of his absenting himself, the wily Bishop felt that in a similar manner he would now triumph over M. le Duc. He did not, however, this time take the trouble to hide himself, but left a letter for the King to say where he was gone—and why.

This letter no one dared to deliver that night nor the next morning, when the King went out hunting. It was only on the evening of December 18th that he received the letter in which Fleury declared that he "would never return to the Court." As before, the King wept, he was sulky with M. le Duc, and constantly demanded his preceptor from every one. It was the Duc de Mortemart, of the party opposed to the First Minister, who dared at length to say to the King that he had only to give his orders, and he would go and bring Fleury back from Issy in his carriage. He even had the courage to tell the boy, whimpering in such a childish manner, that he would also go to M. le Duc and order him on the King's behalf to send a messenger himself to the Bishop of Fréjus and tell him to return.

The result was, as had been anticipated, triumph for Fleury and his party, consternation in the camp of the Condés. Among these, the Queen was as much embarrassed as the rest, for she had now learned that her master was not the King, nor M. le Duc, but the Bishop. It was a lesson which the unfortunate woman

was never allowed to forget in after-years. Her first mortification came very soon, when she vigorously demanded the *cordon bleu* of the order of the Saint-Esprit for M. de Nangis and the Maréchal de Tessé, and was refused point-blank.

A month or two after this rebuff to M. le Duc and the Marquise, a horrible incident occurred which for the time greatly abased their enemies the Tencins, brother and sister. During the frantic gambling for Law's shares during the Regency, Madame de Tencin took the money of one of her lovers, the Jacobite Lord Bolingbroke, to gamble with, saying that she would give him the proceeds. To speculate in the shares, she sent an aimable young councillor in the Parliament backwards and forwards to the Rue Quincampoix to the Bourse. He gained immense sums, which he remitted to Madame de Tencin, and she promised him that she would become his wife, while he was foolish enough to remain infatuated with the horrible woman.

Early in 1726 it transpired that she had refused to give to Bolingbroke the money that she held of his, denying that she had ever received it. La Fresnaye, the young gentleman who had brought back to her the spoils of the Bourse, felt his honour at stake, but he still urged her to marry him, apparently intending to make good the missing sums himself. For reply, Madame de Tencin—who, by-the-bye, was really Mademoiselle, and only called Madame for having been a canoness—snapped her fingers in his face. She told la Fresnaye plainly that she had never dreamed of doing anything else than make use of him as a tool.

On April 6th, 1726, while the Tencins and the rest of Voltaire's enemies were laughing spitefully at his

ineffectual attempts to fight his duel with Rohan-Chabot, the laughers became the laughed at, although it was a horrible tragedy which caused the turn of the tables. M. la Fresnaye, in despair and dishonoured, had taken a dire revenge. After writing a terrible letter, which he sent to a sure place, detailing all he knew of Madame de Tencin's iniquities, and accusing her of ruining him, he repaired to her house. There in her presence, after upbraiding her, he blew his brains out with a pistol.

It was in vain that Madame de Tencin with some magistrates of her acquaintance, without informing the police, contrived to bury the body in quick-lime in the vaults of Saint-Roch; in vain, too, that they pretended that la Fresnaye had died of apoplexy. The dead man's letter remained to explain the whole truth about Madame de Tencin. The Police of the Châtelet, under Hérault, seized her on the 10th, and were about to judge her, when she would have received scant mercy.

Versailles, however, came to her assistance. Fleury, with the aid of the Comte Phelipeaux de Maurepas, the young Secretary of State, contrived to rescue her from the police, who might have hanged her out of hand. They were, however, compelled, if only for her own safety, to put her in the Bastille under a *lettre de cachet*. It was, however, a terrible blow for them, so great that Fleury commenced to talk about retiring, while Madame de Prie was able to write to the Duc de Richelieu, then on an embassy to the Emperor Charles VI. at Vienna, "Everything is once more in order, again I am in repose."

By the end of May, however, her friend Voltaire, released from the Bastille, had been hunted out of France,

while in the honeyed tones with which Fleury remarked to M. le Duc that "one might arrange matters if Madame de Prie and Duverney would go to the country," the First Minister saw a danger. He recognised the fear and hatred of the young King behind the suave words of the old priest—now a Cardinal. Madame de Prie and Pâris-Duverney consented to go to the country for a time, when M. le Duc was rewarded for their departure by the burning of des Chauffours, the head of an enormous institution of vice. None of his several hundred disciples, many of them nobles, protected by Versailles, or Bishops, like Saint-Aignan and la Fare, were allowed to be interfered with. The Conseiller Delpech, the painter Nattier, and the ex-Jesuit the Abbé Desfontaines, although among those whose prosecution Madame de Prie had urged, were allowed to go scot-free.

It was, indeed, Voltaire who, with the chivalry of youth, saved Desfontaines from the Bastille before entering its portals for the second time himself. And yet it was precisely because this wretched Abbé had done him the greatest possible injury that Voltaire rushed off to young Maurepas in haste to save him. Desfontaines had stolen and published as his own, under the name of *La Ligue*, Voltaire's magnificent epic of Henry IV. called *La Henriade*.

Maurepas, an effeminate, frivolous young man, as we have seen the friend of la Tremouille and Gesvres, was himself not without suspicion of being mixed up with the cabal of vice in Paris, whose manners he was considered to have brought to Versailles. He was not sorry, although of the party against Voltaire, the friend of de Prie, to stifle the charge against the Abbé Desfontaines. That there can be no doubt as to Voltaire really having



From an engraving after the picture by Vanloo.

JOSEPH PÂRIS-DUVERNEY.

performed this generous action, was proved by the letter of thanks written by Desfontaines himself, and the statement of that writer most hostile to Voltaire, the learned Nicolardot.

With the absence of Duverney, Versailles was at ease, especially as the Marquise was also away. After a few weeks of absence, however, Pâris-Duverney, learning that his own creatures, appointed by himself, were performing various strange financial operations, boldly returned. Not only did he return himself, but he wrote to Madame de Prie to return also, that M. le Duc and the State were lost in her absence.

Like a whirlwind the Marquise flew back to Versailles. This was what Fleury wished; he had even himself secretly given to Duverney a hint that he would not be averse to seeing the lady back. For he knew that by this time the King hated as well as feared her; by that hatred Fleury expected to profit so soon as his Royal pupil should find himself once more face to face with the favourite of M. le Duc.

The King, however, was too frightened, when in the middle of May the Marquise returned, to act. He would not even speak a word when Fleury begged him to act against Duverney and Madame de Prie, who were behaving as master and mistress at Versailles once more and making every one feel their supreme authority. For about a month more, while Fleury fell at the feet of M. le Duc and begged him to reign alone, "la" Prie remained as the real Queen and ruler of France.

At length the King timidly fled to "Maman" Toulouse at Rambouillet, and at the same time became guilty of the first of those acts of duplicity for which he afterwards became so well known whenever he intended to dismiss

a Minister. Upon leaving for Rambouillet, he begged M. le Duc in the most cordial manner to come and join him there. When the Duc de Bourbon had finished his State affairs that afternoon, the Duc de Charost handed him a letter from the King saying that in future he intended to govern by himself without a First Minister! M. le Duc was exiled to Chantilly. This took place on June 11th, 1726, and the reign of the Marquise de Prie ceased upon the same day.

CHAPTER IV

France, after the Marquise

1727 AND LATER

M. LE DUC was exiled to his home at Chantilly, a punishment which might not have seemed very great when the splendours of that home of the Condés were considered. Unfortunately, the old-womanish spite of the priesthood added a very bitter pill to the first sentence of exile nominally pronounced by the King, actually by Fleury. This was to deprive the energetic Duc de Bourbon of the pleasures of the chase in his country retreat. M. le Duc, who was a *chasseur enragé*, was forbidden his horses and his hounds, his dogs and guns. A petty spite this to wreak upon his rival! but Fleury knew how to make the late ruler of the State wince, and that all the more since he was deprived of the presence and counsels of his soul, Madame de Prie, who was exiled to Courbe-Épine. This was that château in Normandy whence she had recently returned to resume for a short time the helm of government.

As for Pâris-Duverney, a man so able that in order to rule by a proper administration of the taxes he seemed necessary, the old priest had recourse to all his rivals and enemies in order to work his downfall. These were the old agents of the extortion of the days of Louis XIV.,

farmers-general and financiers. To these Fleury remitted the enormous sum of fifty-six millions, owed by them on back taxes, in order that they should take up the matter of supply to the State according to the rotten, old-fashioned methods. They pocketed the fifty-six millions, abolished all regular administration; the farmers-general were re-established everywhere, while Duverney went to rage in the Bastille, in solitude.

While the absolute nothingness of the character of M. le Duc became apparent, by his actually begging the girlish Gesvres to ask grace for him in the matter of hunting, Madame de Prie behaved differently. She affected the greatest stoicism and indifference, and, in her retreat, lived ostentatiously in a manner to show that she did not care—that she snapped her fingers at Fleury and her disgrace.

This young lady, who had been so great and was now only twenty-seven, endeavoured, indeed, to lead a life of the wildest *en train*. She composed verses and wrote plays, and recited or acted before an audience of such members of the Court as she could get to visit her. She had kept a friend—albeit a false one—in the shape of the spiteful spitfire Madame du Deffand; she took a new lover in the shape of a young country gentleman, who was the nephew of the Abbé Damfreville.

Under all her apparent carelessness, she was eating her heart out, and had resolved to die upon a day that she had appointed and announced long in advance, while in the meantime comporting herself after the fashion of a *femme d'esprit*. This she most certainly was—the perusal of one of her long letters to the Duc de Richelieu at Vienna is alone sufficient to reveal that fact. Never was seen such a mixture upon every subject, from the

affairs of the State to the latest *affaires de cœur* of the Royal Princesses, or the Marquise de Villars, as, written in an agreeable style, composed those budgets.

While giving out to everybody that she knew she was going to die upon a certain date, no one believed her, least of all the young lover whom she patronised and who adored her as a slave.

The Duc de Bouillon was among those who was visiting at her château when, three days before her death, she recited in the most brilliant fashion three hundred verses before her guests. On the following day she made a present of a diamond to her lover, then despatched him with fifty thousand livres' worth of other diamonds, to place in security at Rouen.

"Go!" she said; "I don't wish you to see me die." He went, but had no idea that she was in earnest. When he returned, he found her dead! She had died in the most awful agonies; the unhappy woman's legs and feet were all curved and drawn up by the contraction of the muscles caused by the poison, her screams were fearful. The false Duc de Bouillon, upon his return to Versailles, thought it appropriate to pay court to the Cardinal by depicting these tortures in a semi-humorous manner, while representing them as the just torments experienced by one of the damned. The fact that a great nobleman—we cannot call him a gentleman—could behave in such a way after having been her guest, and yet not be scouted by society, affords in itself a picture of the times! And yet there was Royal blood in the veins of the family of Bouillon—to which the great Maréchal Turenne had belonged—the hereditary rulers of Sedan.

The unhappy Madame de Prie being dead, it must be conceded that, in spite of the viciousness of her character,

she was worth more than many who came after her in the management of the State coach. There was an attempt at rude vigour in her government with Duverney; whereas, after her, under the Jesuits and farmers-general, the administration went to sleep. At all events, the Marquise de Prie made a determined effort to abolish certain abuses.

However impure, however furious or bizarre her nature, her ideas, energetic as they were, contained elements of greatness. It is probable that she would have done something for France had she not had the opposition of Fleury to contend with. According to her own words, she had the real interests of the young King at heart, and those interests were most certainly not better served when they were entirely abandoned to the senile ecclesiastic who did not commence to rule until in his seventy-third year.

We will give an extract from one of her letters to Richelieu; it was written at the time that, for the good of M. le Duc, she left the Court for Normandy, while Duverney also went away. After a lot of amusing gossip, the Marquise says:

"If I talked to you about myself, I should not find any such lively matter to discuss. I can only assure you that the ties of attachment must be very strong in me which can induce me to remain in a country where I have just experienced the greatest rebuffs (*les dernières horreurs*) through those whom I had the best served, and that I shall have no other consolation than that of seeing my enemies obliged to lie to injure me. Although that may seem a triumph, I would make more of one by my retreat. Thus, in spite of the violence with which the Queen, M. le Duc, and my friends attack me for taking

this resolution, I wish to let you know that I have proved the stronger; therefore, in no longer exciting jealousy, I shall at the same time only show existing facts in my line of conduct. I shall shortly obtain the esteem of all honest people and the justice due to me, I shall have more tranquillity and repose. Again, no longer will it be imputed to me that I govern people who are not inclined to be governed and whose firmness ought to be recognised. I refuse, while their glory has ever been my sole object, to allow myself longer to be made the pretext by which it is sought to weaken them. I speak to you as my friend, and hope that you will make no other usage of that which I say than to be touched by the confidence reposed in you. . . .

"I find all the obstacles in the world opposed to my intention. I shall have all the more merit in following it, since they only seek to baffle it with chains which, while appearing to be those of flowers, may well contain some of the serpents with which the Court is filled.

"I have never seen anything so black, so low, so false and much to be despised as that which I find there. Only does M. le Duc appear to me to-day as worthy of my veneration and of all my attachment. His firmness, friendship, and truth towards myself have made him for ever the master of my life, which I would with joy lay down in his service."

Upon reading this letter, one feels inclined to exclaim "Poor Madame de Prie!" with one of the great historians of France, who has elsewhere abused her as a vampire and all kinds of evil things.

In her remarks about the Court, that she is truthful is evident; they might have come verbatim from the pages of that honest d'Argenson who ran away to Valen-

ciennes to escape her wiles. With regard to her expressed gratitude to M. le Duc, she proved it; even in doing that which should excite our reprobation, such as giving to him Madame d'Egmont, at the risk of being herself utterly effaced in his affections. During her last days, when she allowed herself to be beloved by the young man who persisted in his adoration, her heart was withered and she never returned that love. Only indeed did she accept his homage from pride, to keep up her reputation, and prove to her enemies that there still existed those who would persist in casting themselves at her feet. Madame de Prie had already decided to die when he presented himself again and again, and would not be sent away. When all else is said, the Marquise de Prie, if a female tyrant, was yet a young woman of courage. This she proved in her tentatives of reform with Duverney; in the manner in which she returned to the Court, a hornets' nest of her enemies, which she cowed by her presence; and, above all, by the manner in which, like the victim of the red Indian tied to the stake, she apparently kept up the liveliest spirits until the day that she had decreed was to terminate her existence, and then boldly kept her word and passed out into the unknown.

After M. le Duc and Madame de Prie had disappeared from the scene of the Court, the state of affairs in France soon became pitiable in the extreme. Under Fleury's *contrôleur des finances* Desforts, who made a foolish arrangement with the receivers and farmers-general, the people were ruined everywhere throughout the country, where armies of clerks, tax-gatherers, archers, and bailiffs invaded every home. In vain was it that the wretched people crowded into the towns and cities.

There they were worse off than ever, the cruel system of *octroi* duties pressing most heavily upon those of the lowest classes.

As if these miseries were not enough, religious persecution recommenced. From Noailles, the aged Archbishop of Paris, downwards, every person was persecuted who was suspected of not accepting in its entirety the absurd Papal Bull *Unigenitus*, which made of the Pope a god. The abominable Tencin, who before he succeeded in being elevated to Cardinal's rank had been made Archbishop of Embrun, by the King's orders—that is to say, those of Fleury and the Jesuits—assembled a Court of Bishops at Embrun, composed of prelates favourable to the Bull. This Council of Embrun has been called the *brigandage d'Embrun*. Without allowing him to speak on his own behalf, they condemned the old Soanen, a Bishop eighty years of age, to the cold mountains of Auvergne, where he died. Noailles, with twelve Bishops, vainly protested against this infamous Council, presided over by an infamous man.

But Tencin and his crew, which included a wretch like Lafiteau, whom even Cardinal Dubois had punished for his thefts, were too strong for the Archbishop of Paris. This old man, whose life since 1711 had but been a long story of Jesuit persecution, was soon literally worried to death. He was forced to accept the Bull, however, before he, like Soanen, gave up the ghost.

While the followers of St. Augustine, those who maintained that man had a right to a conscience of his own, were in this manner being worried, while the police-agents of Hérault were everywhere inscribing their names upon the registers and finding in Chauvelin, the able new Keeper of the Seals, a hard and bitter judge who

handed them over to Saint-Florentin, the gaoler, son of la Vrillière, the Protestants were not forgotten.

M. le Duc, before his fall, had eliminated from the revived edicts against these the clause which subjected to death those accused of "relapse;" he had, however, passed another clause unnoticed. By this clause all parish priests possessed the power to take, one by one, any man or woman whom he chose, and argue or bargain with them in private, in such manner as he thought fit, upon the question of the penalties to which they or those near and dear to them were exposed. Seeing the danger to women, in a time when the priesthood were not over-famous for morality, the old edict of Louis XIV. had expressly stipulated that the curé or other priest should not be alone to examine those whom he chose to interrogate. This clause as altered soon became a cause of great terror to the unhappy Protestant women who sought to save their husbands or brothers from some dreadful fate.

The persecution, however, far from stamping out the Protestantism which existed concealed in the country, merely caused the death of many martyrs. A noble young pastor of Geneva, Antoine Court, restored the Reformed faith in France. Himself leaving wife and children to come and preach in the mountain villages and caverns, or the recesses of the forests, he ordained others, who ordained more in turn. Hunted about, starved or hanged, if the numbers of these pastors were constantly being diminished, there were thus always found others ready to replace them and receive in turn the crown of martyrdom, for the sake of the souls that they might save. In spite of the law which hanged the pastors, a seminary was founded at Lausanne, in Switzer-

land, to furnish victims for the dragoons and judges. They came into France, to live thenceforward like wild beasts, chased from rock to rock, ever flying, always in hiding, without a fire, without a roof! And, with it all, they maintained a great instinct of peace; preaching to the multitudes against armed resistance, and non-resistance to those who would assassinate them. As in the days of the massacres in the Cévennes forty years earlier, when the poor people, driven in time to armed resistance, were known as the Camisards, the poor, persecuted creatures considered that to pray for the King, that his heart might be rendered merciful towards them, was the only right way in which to avoid the miseries inflicted upon them in the name of religion. Meanwhile, their marriages and baptisms took place in secret under the panoply of heaven, since from the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon in 1685, all the Protestant churches had been destroyed in France.

At length, against these celebrations of the Christian rites in the woods and fields, the Bishops, becoming more and more intolerant, called for a repetition of the dragonnades. In 1738 they demanded the sword and military government to suppress those whom all other means, however severe, had failed to convince and convert.

The strangest thing, in reference to the intolerance of the Catholic clergy towards the Protestants, was that the very Jansenists, who had so much to fear from persecution themselves, were as intolerant as those of the Jesuitical tendency who supported the Bull *Unigenitus*. The good-natured and irreligious Regent soon found this out when he assumed the reins of government in 1715.

Had not the Archbishop Noailles, the Chancelier d'Aguesseau, and many Jansenist *conseillers* of the Parliament of Paris been so bitter against the Protestants, he would have recalled to the kingdom all the scattered thousands of Huguenots, who had gone to enrich other countries with their industries, or the armies of foreign potentates with their skill and valour. During the last fourteen years of the seventeenth, and during the eighteenth century until the Peace of Utrecht, Frenchmen frequently found that the most stubborn and valorous foes whom they had to encounter were Protestant Frenchmen who had been driven from their native country. To give but one instance of this, at the battle of the Boyne, in 1690, the French troops aiding James II., under the Comte de Lauzun, were mainly defeated by the French Protestants, who, under the French Duc de Schomberg, had reinforced William of Orange.

To return to the Chancelier d'Aguesseau : he, under the Regent in 1721, severely reproved the Intendants in the provinces who did not repress the Protestants. They indeed enjoyed considerably more repose than usual, owing to the known indifference of the Regent, during the eight years that he held the supreme power. And yet this Jansenist d'Aguesseau was a very honest man, who had dared to flout the great Louis XIV. to his face in the matter of refusing to register the Bull upon the records of the Parliament. Another very honest man was an austere Jansenist Bishop named Colbert. According to Corbière, this Bishop, who for forty years fought boldly against the Ultramontanes, was, on that account, none the less hostile to the Protestants.

Upon the whole, therefore, it would seem as if the

unfortunate members of the Reformed faith had little more mercy to expect from the one great Catholic party than from the other; but had the Duc d'Orléans lived longer, they probably would have had their hard lot improved.

The moral misery throughout the kingdom of France was, under any circumstances, extreme from the beginning of the influence of Fleury. While Louis XIV. had dazzled and the Regent lured onward with false hopes, under the King's old preceptor there was neither hope nor thought. It was a government as dull as ditch-water, tiresome, tedious, when the end of one day meant nothing as much as did the end of that which followed. All was as monotonous as the dull skies of the short winter days as seen from the unhealthy and narrow streets of Paris. Here, owing to the ridiculous laws which forbade building outside the walls, the surplus of the inhabitants lived in a huge and miserable camp of torn canvas and rotten planks; while, in the streets, the houses grew higher and higher. Tenements of seven and eight stories in height were everywhere to be seen, the garret roofs of which let in the rain everywhere. The damp running down the walls on the insides of the houses left greenish mouldy streaks from floor to floor, while the lower stages were dark, and regular wells of standing water. Up under the dripping roof the apprentices and serving-women were all crowded together, with no fireplaces and no carpeting upon the filthy boarding. Upon the ground floor, in the shop or counting-house, the visitor was on entering greeted with the pale and emaciated faces of unhealthy men and women, living in an atmosphere of damp and mould which clung to everything.

Such was the condition of the greater part of Paris in

the reign of Louis XV. Since the streets were, in addition, crowded with sturdy, deformed, or maimed beggars, often old soldiers who would stop at no kind of violence, it was, save for the rich or noble who could go out attended and armed, not a very pleasant place to live in. Versailles being once more the Court, since during the last two years of his life the Regent had left the Palais-Royal and contrived, by a ruse, to instal the young King there, in order to avoid the intrigues of the Duc de Villeroi, the greater number of the courtiers always remained there, where was the seat of Government. Paris being ten miles distant, the Court avoided the city, and for which, a few years later, Louis XV. grew to have a positive hatred.

While such was the general condition of affairs prevailing after the fall of the Duc de Bourbon and Madame de Prie, owing to the indignation caused by the persecution of the Jansenists in 1727, a religious fanaticism arose in opposition to it. The persecution itself was a false fanaticism, set to work by all the interested prelates, from Fleury downwards, who wished to stand in well with Rome, that which arose in opposition to it was real when it commenced in 1728, became crazy in 1729, and later on resulted in depravity.

There was a certain good, humble, and charitable deacon of the Jansenist faction, who died after having, from religious asceticism, become semi-deranged. His name was Pâris, and he had lived in a kind of hermit's retreat, made of rough planks, in a damp courtyard in the quarter of Saint-Marceau.

His death, which resulted from starvation owing to his giving away all that he had, created a great stir among a large number of people, who, even before death, looked

upon him as a saint. Accordingly, no sooner was Pâris buried than, throughout the summer of 1727, sick people commenced to drag themselves to the holy man's tomb. His brother, a *conseiller* in the Parliament, had erected over his grave a marble slab, at a height of about one foot from the ground. Some of those who from faith visited the saint's tomb, died; others declared themselves cured of their maladies. The crowd increased daily, chiefly consisting of sick ladies or unmarried girls. These, to get closer to the holy earth, would squeeze themselves under the marble slab and kiss the ground or swallow some earth; when many would fall into trances from ecstasy, or have attacks of an hysterical nature, after which they would leave, declaring themselves cured. When, the religious persecution increasing, the Jansenist priests were deprived of their offices, the condition of things around the tomb of the deacon Pâris soon amounted to a veritable delirium. Many indeed were the miracles which were declared to have taken place owing to the agency of the departed saint, whose reputation soon spread far and wide, while they found their chronicler in a certain Carré de Montgeron. His book, entitled *Vérité des miracles du bienheureux Pâris*, is most instructive. It commences by relating in detail all the miseries and ills of the times, and then, with the greatest sincerity and mentioning witnesses, describes all the wonderful cures which took place. No stone is left unturned by Montgeron to prove the miracles; many of the names he gives of witnesses are those of serious savants, who had made a critical and searching examination into the facts. The cures which took place, and apparently there really were some, would seem to have been the result of a sort of hypnotic effect created upon

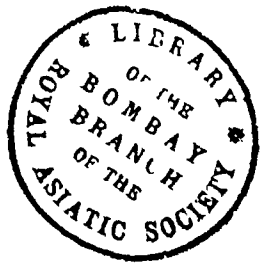
the imagination. The sick thought themselves well—therefore they were well.

Those cured meanwhile no longer felt the need of the priests who had been taken away from them. They felt that they now possessed that grace within themselves which made them semi-divine. Thus even people at a distance, hearing the echo of the call of these semi-divine voices, soon came to Saint-Medard cemetery, to squeeze themselves in turn under the marble slab, and share in the solace of the condition of grace to the soul which accompanied the relief from the ills of the body.

Meanwhile, no less than fifty learned doctors of the Sorbonne, who had nobly protested against the ill-treatment meted out to the old Bishop Soanen, were carried off by force and thrust into the hardest prisons of the State. These cruelties excited the imagination of the public, and the fanaticism of the persecuted Jansenists only increased all the more when the gates of the little cemetery were definitely closed upon them. The result was that the unfortunate women, deprived of the open-air devotion to which they had been able to give themselves over at the tomb of Pâris, commenced, in the secret retreats to which they were compelled to resort, to follow, in an *outré* manner, the inclination of their religious tenets, they believing that the sorrows of the innocent served as expiation for the guilty.

Accordingly, as the years rolled by and Versailles plunged itself deeper and deeper into the mire of debauchery, so also did the innocent martyrs seek out more and more cruel penances for themselves. With the most painful tortures, offered as a sacrifice to God, they appealed for mercy for the King, implored that the cup of vengeance might be turned from him to them, who

expiated his sins in their own persons. To those who may say that these ecstasies, these furies of hunger and thirst, these self-inflicted floggings and other cruel punishments, were a perversion of the real ideas of Christianity, the reply is, that it was not so according to the stories of the lives of the saints. The recorded legends of all the saints are alike. Whoever reads them will see that all say that suffering purifies, that the love of death is the real path which leads to the salvation of the soul. Thus undoubtedly, according to their lights, these Jansenists were true Christians. Unfortunately, they possessed all the intolerance so often seen in the various sects of Christianity. One marvels that they were not moved by the extraordinary patience and resignation shown at the same period by the Protestants.


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CHAPTER V

A Troublesome Queen

1724—1731

THE restoration of the royalty of the priesthood, marching to aggressive warfare under the banner of the Bull, was not the outcome of revived religious sentiment, but that of interested motives. At its head were men like Tencin, already Archbishop of Embrun, Tressan, Almoner to the late Regent, who had revived and put before M. le Duc the old edicts of Louis XIV., and Fleury himself. All of these were seeking the Cardinal's hat, to obtain which it was necessary to make evident to Rome their energy in strongly repressing schism and heresy in France.

Behind these leaders were a very large body of the priesthood, fighting against a very actual danger with which of recent years they had been twice threatened. The goods of the Church were at stake. During the Regency, John Law, the indomitable Scotsman, had when Contrôleur-Général endeavoured to compel the priesthood to sell half of the properties which they had acquired during the last hundred and twenty years; while, under the rule of Madame de Prie, Pâris-Duverney had made a determined effort to tax their enormous revenues for the benefit of the State.

The movement for the suppression of heresy was by no means confined to France; and in Poland the action of the Jesuits was such as to give rise to the state of affairs which, before the end of the reign of Louis XV., afforded Frederick the Great the pretext for the partition of Poland with Austria and Russia.

Poland had taken under its protection two merchant cities of Germanic origin—Thorn and Dantzic.

The latter-named city, in Polish Gdansk, with an administrative district extending a hundred miles along the Baltic, is traversed by the River Vistula, and now forms a province of West Prussia. The city of Dantzic, which abounds with learned, charitable, and artistic institutions, is still, as in the days of Louis XV., chiefly the home of Protestant inhabitants. In exports it is nowadays probably the first Prussian port, where also ship-building is extensively carried on. In 1310 Dantzic fell under the sway of the order of Teutonic Knights, and became a German city in the midst of a Polish population, the protection of whose State it obtained in 1454 while remaining a free city.

The town of Thorn, which was likewise a stronghold of the Reformed faith, is chiefly celebrated as having been the birthplace of Copernicus, in Polish Nicolas Kopernik, the German astronomer who was the discoverer of the system of the planetary revolutions. He was born at Thorn, which now like Dantzic forms part of Prussia, on February 19th, 1473, and died at Frauenberg in June, 1543. Oddly enough, he received the first copy of the first edition of his six books on the very morning of the day that he died.

The country of Poland having until the seventeenth century been the protector of free institutions and,

largely Protestant itself, the hospitable receiver of Protestant exiles, had generously extended its hand to assist Thorn and Dantzic. With the seventeenth century however, came a change. Poland, being three times invaded by the Protestant Swedes, went over to the enemy, the Jesuits, who had gradually insinuated themselves into all the households. Thenceforth the banner of Poland became that of the Catholic Church—the Virgin. Wounded in their pride, the greater number of the inhabitants now hated the religion of Reform which they had formerly espoused and protected. Thorn and Dantzic, however, refused to be gained by the suavities of the Order of Jesus, and remained ultra-Protestant. It was with great difficulty that, one by one, the Jesuits contrived to enter these free cities also, and establish themselves in the houses of the nobility. They founded a school and a college in Thorn for the education of the young nobles. These proud young lords, marching about sword on hip, were not contented with the religious Jesuit-led processions with which they offended the eyes of the majority of the inhabitants of Thorn: they set to work to provoke and quarrel with the merchant population. When the Lutheran lookers-on refused to remove their hats as they passed with their procession of the Virgin, they attacked them. Thereupon the magistrates arrested one of the noble students, and the Jesuits in return laid violent hands upon the people. As a result, there was a riot of the workmen, who broke into the Jesuit college and smashed up everything, including two altars, also burning the image of the Virgin which had given rise to the quarrel.

The Virgin being the sacred emblem of the flag of Poland, the Jesuits had no difficulty in making of these

religious disturbances a national affair. They argued that if Louis XIV., a mere human being, had revenged his personal majesty, which was outraged by Genoa, by crushing that city with bomb-shells, how much more right would Poland have to avenge the wrongs of her divine Virgin! The Jesuits violently demanded the death of the magistrates themselves; they were not contented with merely demanding the blood of the workmen who had retaliated upon their pupils, when they first attacked them.

The Saxon Elector Augustus, who sat also upon the throne of Poland, a drunkard and debauchee, was afraid to protect his brother-Germans from the result of the insult to the Polish flag. While rescuing one alone, he left the remainder of the arrested magistrates in the claws of the Jesuits, who, before sending them to the scaffold, tortured the unhappy men almost to death with priestly exhortations to recant, in order that they might die Catholics, which they refused to do.

Ten heads fell to satisfy Jesuit revenge, in December, 1724; before which, however, not only had the second King of Prussia, Frederick William I., father of Frederick the Great, intervened, but Sweden, Hanover, Denmark, Holland, England, and even France, through M. le Duc, had made representations to save the innocent magistrates of Thorn.

There was, however, no combination between the Powers; their separate action was also slow. Thus the Jesuits were triumphant; the ten heads fell at Thorn, and, as a result, eventually Poland was dismembered. The excuse for the dismemberment being the protection of those of the Protestant and Greek Churches, the Poles had little for which to be thankful to the Jesuits, who

were constantly leading them into the extremes of violence.

While in Poland this party were laying up the seeds from which subsequently sprung the dismemberment of the State, in Spain they were not behindhand. Here, in April, 1725, the ambitious Italian Queen, Elizabeth Farnese, and her husband Philip V., whom with her wine and her drugs she rendered for a time half-crazy and bestial, were ruled by their confessors, Montgon and Bermudez. To be more accurate, it might perhaps be said that while the Queen made of Father Montgon her secretary and man of affairs, the Jesuit Bermudez, the hater of the Jansenists, burned to establish the French Philip V. at Versailles, and pushed him in that direction.

During the period of the abdication of Philip from the Spanish throne, while his son Luis, for eight months only, was Monarch, the King and Queen retired to the castle of San Ildefonso, where they had laid up all the revenues of the coming year, levied in advance, to furnish them with the means of entry into France. Unfortunately for them, while with their baggage packed, hand-bag in hand, they eagerly read each bulletin which announced that the young Louis XV. suffered from a bad cold, that nephew of Philip V. did not die. On the other hand, he lived, sent back the child Infanta, married Marie Lesczynska, and generally upset the plans of San Ildefonso.

Who did die was the young King Luis, whereupon his widow, daughter of the Regent, was packed off back to France with Mademoiselle de Beaujolais, her sister; while the Queen of Spain dragged forth her husband from his swinish retreat and filthy clothing and made him resume the crown, in spite of the solemn oaths which he had sworn.

The Queen, in league with the Jesuits in Italy, friends of the so-called James III. of England, the old Pretender, more furiously than ever recommenced her plottings to upset the peace of Europe. Since there was no longer any question of her husband relinquishing one throne for the sake of obtaining another, Elizabeth Farnese turned her thoughts more ardently than ever in the direction of Italy. There she sought to establish various kingdoms and principalities—for her two sons, Carlos and Philip, in the first instance; one for herself, too, should she become a widow.

Austria and Savoy, the Duke of which latter State had become King of Sardinia in 1718, as the result of the Queen of Spain's folly, remained the paramount Powers in Italy. It had hitherto been Elizabeth's plan, which had signally failed, to enforce the assistance of England in her Italian plans against Austria, terrifying that Power by launching the Pretender upon her shores.

Her compact with Charles XII. of Sweden having failed, owing to that adventurous King's death, her sea expedition fitted out by Cardinal Alberoni for Scotland having been wrecked, her fleet off the shores of Sicily having been destroyed by Admiral Byng, neither England nor Austria had been affected by the Queen's menaces. In the month of April, 1725, the Queen formed a new plan, encouraged thereto by a Spanish-Dutch adventurer who, formerly a Protestant, came into her service and became a Catholic. This was an empty-headed boaster whom she created Duke of Riperda. The old idea of launching the Pretender, who had failed so completely in the rising of 1715, once more upon the coasts of Scotland was not abandoned in the new combination of the Parmesan Princess.

In her blind fury against France, she sought to humble that country, the ally of England, with England. Thus, while the old romance of the Jesuits, the re-establishment of a Catholic Prince upon the throne of Great Britain, was not forgotten, Elizabeth sought a new ally, one whom she hoped to use against both Great Britain and France. This was Austria, the very Power whose territories she most coveted, by whose means she now fancied that she would be enabled to change the face of Europe. Riperda undertook to manage the business for the Queen of Spain—it would be easy. It was only the matter of a few ducats to Charles VI., Emperor of Germany, hereditary ruler of Austria as Grand Duke, of Bohemia and Hungary as King, since 1714 lord of Naples, Milan, and other Italian principalities, ruler also of the Netherlands and Sicily.

Elizabeth accordingly sought for an intimate alliance with this Charles VI., who, during the War of the Spanish Succession, had actually at one time been declared King in Spain, where he was fighting for his rights. He would, indeed, have been crowned at Madrid in 1706, but refused because he had not the proper regal outfit. Elizabeth sent Riperda to Vienna, his pockets being lined with all the gold that could be procured. At the same time the celebrated profligate the Duc de Richelieu, great-nephew of Cardinal Richelieu, was sent to Vienna by France to upset Riperda's plans if possible. We may here remark casually that his first efforts in that direction resulted in his upsetting Riperda himself. By hustling the Spanish Ambassador so violently that he fell down the grand-ducal staircase, Richelieu forcibly obtained precedence of entry to the presence of the Emperor. For this insult, Riperda, who was a poltroon, refused to ask

for satisfaction with the sword, although Richelieu, in a very insulting manner, called upon him to ask for tidings of his health.

The Emperor Charles was just at this time fishing round in all directions to gain adherents to help him in carrying out an illegal scheme of his own. By this scheme, which he called a Pragmatic, he sought to upset the Salic and constitutional law of the various countries of which he was hereditary ruler. He had no sons, only two young daughters, Maria Theresa and Maria Eleonora, the latter born in 1718, by his wife Elizabeth of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, who had remained with Count Stahrenberg, her Minister, as Queen of Spain in Barcelona until 1713, although Philip V. had ascended the throne in 1700 and was reigning with the Savoyarde Princess Louise Marie, his first wife at Madrid. Charles himself had, in the meantime, at the suggestion of Prince Eugène, returned to Germany and been elected and crowned Emperor in 1711, he being the son of the Emperor Leopold I. and brother of the Emperor Joseph I., whom he succeeded.

While uniting in his person so many grandeurs and dignities, Charles was the last heir male of the great house of Hapsburg, or Habsburg, in which family the Empire, supposed to be elective, had remained as if hereditary ever since, in 1273, Rudolph of Hapsburg-Lauffenburg, son of Count Albert IV., became first Emperor of the line. The family of Hapsburg was even then a very ancient one of potentates who had ruled over a great portion of Europe, being descended from Ethico I., a Duke of the Alemannia in the seventh century.

The elder of Charles VI.'s daughters was Maria Theresa, born in May, 1717, to whom he was anxious

to leave all his crowns—although, of course, they would not include the Empire, it being, as mentioned, elective by the Princes of Germany holding the rank of Elector. The young Maria Theresa was affianced at this time to Prince Francis of Lorraine, who, when John Gaston de Médicis died, as the last of his line, in 1737, became Grand Duke of Tuscany, and gave in exchange Lorraine to King Stanislas, ex-King of Poland, with reversion to France of the duchy of Lorraine at his death.

In pursuit of his plan to obtain the recognition by Europe of his daughter as his heiress, in spite of the Salic law, Charles VI. was, at the time of Riperda's embassy, in the mood to make concessions in any direction where they would be likely to be most useful. Riperda, therefore, imagined that he would have no difficulty in bending the Emperor to the will of the Queen of Spain and obtaining his alliance.

Elizabeth Farnese wished to obtain for her family in Italy, Tuscany, Parma, Piacenza, Naples, and as much as possible of Milan and Piedmont, this latter being part of the dominions of the King of Sardinia. Nor did her pretensions fall short of Sicily. In fact, there were none of the Italian duchies which she did not desire. Her more immediate desire was, however, to obtain the island of Minorca and Gibraltar from the English, who had taken the Rock in 1704 and had it ceded to them by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Also she desired the invasion of France.

The ideas of the Queen of Spain were that since the Emperor, for all the kingdoms that he possessed, was in want of money, this old enemy of Spain, on being supplied liberally with funds, should arm once more that Savoyard

hero the Prince Eugène, the son of the Comte de Soissons and Olympia Mancini, one of the first sweethearts of the Grand Monarque. With an enormous army Eugène should fall upon France and, tooth and nail, ravage its fair domains. At the same time an invincible Spanish fleet, aided by a Russian squadron, should menace the coasts of England. Spain would meanwhile invest Gibraltar. George I. would, she imagined, immediately become frightened and give instructions for Gibraltar to be surrendered forthwith. This action would make him unpopular in Great Britain, where he would be deposed. Thereupon the Pretender would enter upon his dominions as James III. without being obliged to strike a blow.

A pretty fable indeed! and rendered none the less chimerical that, as if to increase the difficulties with the British nation, the whole was to be accomplished under the Jesuit flag.

The Pretender had been sufficiently wise to provide himself with a council of Protestants. His wife, Clementina Sobieski, a Polish woman of Jesuitical leanings, was instructed from Madrid to make him get rid of these Protestants. This she accomplished by retiring to a convent and refusing to come out until the affair was all constituted upon religious grounds, the forced conversion of Great Britain to the faith of Rome, where the Pretender resided.

In Vienna, however, the Empress was also the ruler of her husband, and she had no cause to love that Spain where she had, while Queen, so long been shut up in Barcelona. Therefore, while taking the Spanish ducats and constantly asking for more, Charles treated Riperda politely, and thoroughly befooled him. He had not

the remotest idea of plunging, on behalf of Spain, into a bloody war with that Europe whose adherence he sought to his Pragmatic Sanction. All that the Emperor did was to make a pretence of threatening Holland. England, alarmed, was at this time governed by Sir Robert Walpole, who entered into mutual treaties with France and Prussia, while dispatching fleets in all directions to overawe Russia and Spain, at home and in her American colonies. Three large fleets were sent to the Mediterranean.

By May 31st, 1726, the Emperor had extracted from the Duke of Riperda the last of the Spanish ducats. He was then tired of the whole business and a richer man than before, so he definitely abandoned Spain.

It might have been imagined that the Queen of that country would then have had sense enough to give up her enterprise. Not at all! She merely exclaimed, "M. le Duc is no longer at the head of affairs in France; we have only got Fleury to deal with. Let us send the Abbé Montgon to him and ask him to give us three months' grace, during which he does nothing. We, in the meantime, will attack his ally, England, alone. During those three months we will take Gibraltar, the House of Brunswick will fall, and the Stuarts will be back again in England."

Montgon flew to Paris, and, strange to say, when by the Queen's express orders the Spanish emissary laid bare before the Cardinal the whole design, he did not refuse the three months' grace desired. Acting as Fleury the Jesuit-ridden priest rather than as Fleury the Minister and ruler of France, he was afraid of his ultramontane friends if he should refuse.

Montgon had not gone to France as the emissary of

the Queen alone. The King, Philip V., who, with his manhood restored, had now also a will of his own, sent him to rally all the old friends of his Bourbon house—to the Duc de Bourbon and his adherents. The Queen, however, gave to the Abbé Montgon secret instructions to reveal to Fleury all that M. le Duc might say. This he did. Montgon, who has left five great volumes behind him, reveals all the plottings, all the incidents of this shady affair. He distinctly shows the opposition existing between the King and the Queen of Spain, and, further, that Fleury, treacherously to England, not only accorded to Spain the time to take Gibraltar, but that to raise Scotland also and let the Pretender be loosed upon the Caledonian shores. The reason for his conduct is explained above—his servility to the Jesuits, who had years before withdrawn him from the swamps of Fréjus, and, by appointing one of their order as his confessor, whom he was forced to obey, they had given him also a fresh start in life. While tacking about, Fleury deceived Walpole, with whom he was not yet in accord, as, owing to mutual pacific inclinations, he afterwards became.

While thus preparing for the siege of Gibraltar, it was vainly pointed out to the Queen that it was an impossibility to take that stronghold by land alone, that the command of the seas was necessary. To Elizabeth it was all the same, she insisted upon proceeding, even when the Jacobite agents in Rome assured her that Scotland was not ripe for an invasion. Austria now openly blamed her and worked against her views in Italy, while the King told his wife that history would call her the assassin of his people, and asked, with anguish, why there should be all this unnecessary effusion of blood. Indeed, although Philip, now in the full possession of his

senses, vainly exclaimed, "Oh the false—the false Italian!" the siege took place.

The Condé de las Torres with 30,000 men sat down before Gibraltar for four months in 1727, but the attempt to take the Rock proved a dismal failure, and the siege had to be raised without any result save disaster to the Spanish forces.

The Bourbon King, now filled with religious remorse, endeavoured to abdicate once more; the Italian Queen, however, fearing to see Spain revert to its owners, the Spaniards, contrived to keep him a prisoner under lock and key. The real state in which he was then has never been known, but what is known is that Philip V. protested by refusing to shave and, although religious, by refusing also to hear the Mass. The Queen now herself went through the farce of taking the robe of the Franciscan Order of Mendicants, which she wore for eight months in 1728. Before the end of that time the King consented to shave and there was a reconciliation, and the Queen became the mother of another child, a girl, in March, 1729.

In the meantime George II. had come to the throne (in 1727). Spain, at an end of her resources, had been compelled to disarm, and peace had been signed with England. Thus, for the time being, was this wicked and troublesome Italian woman compelled to cease from disturbing Europe with her continued agitations. By the Treaty of Seville, all that she gained was the promise of the succession of one of her sons to the principality of Parma, whence she herself came, upon the death of her uncle the ruling Duke, and to Tuscany, which latter she never obtained. Spain, and England some time later (1731), gave to the Emperor Charles their guarantee to the

Pragmatic Sanction. Other countries also gave this guarantee, which ensured to the mind of the Emperor a repose which he would not have felt had that mind but been prophetic enough to foresee the events that occurred upon his death. For guarantees and treaties entered into between the European Princes in the eighteenth century greatly resembled pie-crust, in that they were made solely to be broken.

CHAPTER VI

The Duc de Richelieu and Prince Eugène

1725—1729

WHILE the Queen of Spain had, by the endless intrigues in which she had indulged, seriously compromised the peace of Europe, the lot of the still young Duc de Richelieu, the envoy of France at the Court of Vienna, had not exactly resembled a bed of roses.

For a long time debarred from the permission to make his public and official entry, when this was at length accorded he endeavoured to carry out this function with a magnificence such as would redound to the glory of France.

The description of this public entry of Richelieu into Vienna reads, indeed, more like that of a glorified Lord Mayor's show than anything else. It was made with seventy-five coaches, each with six horses, the trappings of coaches and horses alike being of gold, silver, and richest velvets of different colours.

The Ambassador's own carriage was draped within and without with crimson velvet, covered with gold embroidery in relief, heavy with fringes of gold; the four panels carried his arms in golden relief, his monogram in the same style being upon the small side-panels. The large panel behind, and the box, were treated in similar

fashion, golden branches and flowers in relief also draping the velvet hangings of the box. The six horses of this carriage were bright bays, their harness, of crimson velvet, covered with silver-gilt plates, while upon the heads of each were aigrettes of red feathers and gold ornaments interwoven.

The second coach was in blue, the third in green, the fourth in jonquil-tinted velvet, the fifth in grey, the sixth in rose-coloured velvet, all equally covered with gold and silver, and some carrying mythological designs, such as figures of Prudence, Secrecy, Silence, Fame, and so on. The horses of each coach varied in colour—one had greys, another blacks, a third chestnuts, a fourth roans; while armed outriders and footmen, smothered in golden ornaments, accompanied the cortège, the furnishing of which must have cost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Upon the principle of that renowned fop the Duke of Buckingham, who at a ball in the presence of Anne of Austria wore pearls so loosely attached that they were meant to fall and be gathered up by the company, Richelieu imagined the idea of shoeing all his horses with silver, the shoes only being attached by one nail. They thus fell off as the cortège progressed, and were gathered up by the crowd.

Upon the morrow of this public entrance the Ambassador was accorded his public audience of the Emperor Charles VI. and the Empress, also of the dowager Empress Amélie. To this, attired in the full robes of a peer of France, Richelieu proceeded with equal magnificence, while, after the audience, he gave a banquet in his palace to more than five hundred persons of distinction. He also gave a fête for the people at large,

who were permitted to roam at will about his magnificent apartments.

Whether or no this splendour dazzled the Emperor, it most certainly dazzled the great ladies of Vienna. It also appalled the Duc's rival, the Duke of Riperda, who precipitately fled from Vienna on the very day of the audience.

The letters of Richelieu to Fleury, for whose Cardinal's hat he was working with the Emperor through the Prince Eugène, soon reveal the fact that all this magnificence reduced him to very great straits. Fleury's letters in reply usually promise money, which is to be sent by the Comte de Morville as soon as it can be procured, but never arrives, and in the meantime Richelieu finds himself greatly in debt. Fleury, however, writes to him to keep up appearances in the best way that he can, while promising upon his side not to allow it to be known to any one that he is pressed for money. This, it seems, was the least that Fleury could do, since he did not pay the appointments of the Ambassador in cash.

Accordingly, while the great-nephew of Cardinal Richelieu, finding himself baffled at every turn by the Emperor and Prince Eugène in matters of policy, began to grow impatient, the actual ruler of France found other means to allay him when he earnestly urged his recall. This was to promise that the King would before long make him a *chevalier des ordres*—that is to say, give him the coveted *cordon bleu* of the Order of the Holy Ghost. With this great distinction held out as a bait, Richelieu held on at Vienna for more than three years, from 1725 almost to 1729.

In the meantime love, as usual with this profligate

noble, came to his assistance in several ways. His many mistresses among the great ladies of Paris remitted to him large sums of money, while two new mistresses, with whom he formed liaisons among the great ladies of Vienna, helped him politically.

Among the former class there was notably a certain Duchesse, whose scruples he had, by a combination of fraud and audacity, contrived to overcome when, quite as a boy as Duc de Fronsac, he had been staying in her château. There he took advantage of the certainly very free tricks which the ladies played upon him to play a trick in return—one which landed him in the apartment of the Duchesse, where he remained in spite of her religious scruples.

This woman, however, after weakening for a time to the worthless Richelieu, with whom she was honestly in love, refused before long, despite his prayers, to remain to him anything more than a friend. In this capacity not only was she kind to a poor young *bourgeoise*, Madame Michelin, whom he deceived and whose death he caused of a broken heart, but she often vainly urged him to reform. Although reformation was not possible to the depraved nature of a man who remained a rake until eighty years of age, the Duchesse, having become a widow, never lost her interest in him. While, therefore, he was vainly awaiting remittances from M. de Morville, who was acting as Foreign Minister under Fleury, she occasionally relieved his necessity by sending him as much as 100,000 livres at a time, while others helped him in a similar manner.

There were no foolish scruples of honour about the Duc de Richelieu to debar him from taking money from his mistresses, old or new. On the contrary, it was a

known thing among a great many of the ladies who sought to become of the fashionable Court world by, in the recognised manner, passing first through the hands of the Duc de Richelieu, that they must pay him for his favours. He used to charge a large sum for a single rendezvous. The letters which he received proposing these were so many that he was in the habit of throwing quantities on one side unopened, in which condition they were found more than half a century later, upon his death, which took place at the age of ninety-two, in 1788.

In Vienna, finding that he was not advancing in State negotiations, and especially was unable to discover what were the secret dispositions and inclinations towards France of the Emperor and Prince Eugène, he conceived the idea of making up to the Countess Batthyàny, the mistress of this latter. The Countess Batthyàny, by birth Eleonora Strattmann, the last of her race, was a young and beautiful woman who enjoyed the entire confidence of this Prince, who, having been born in Paris in 1663, was now sixty-two years of age. Richelieu, being only twenty-nine, thought that he would have no great difficulty in persuading the Countess that the merits of youth upon his side would prove an equivalent of all the honours which were laid at her feet by one who, born a Frenchman, had always been the enemy of France. Nor was he mistaken; for he soon shared the favours of the lady with the hero of so many combats, to whom she proved ere long so faithless that she whispered upon the shoulder of her new lover all the State secrets that she learned from the old one, greatly to the advantage of Richelieu in his negotiations.

If Eugène, who might well have been the son of



From a mezzotint after J. Kupezky.

PRINCE EUGÈNE OF SAVOY.

Louis XIV.; were the enemy of France, that Monarch had only to blame himself and his fiery War Minister Louvois for the fact that that country had been deprived of his services. His father, Eugène Maurice, Comte de Soissons, was the grandson of Emanuel I., Duke of Savoy; while Olympia Mancini, his mother, was one of the beautiful nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, with whom Louis XIV. had love affairs before and after her marriage. In company with her brother-in-law the Comte de Clermont, Olympia is supposed to have poisoned her husband. Then hurriedly leaving France for Madrid, she there also is believed to have poisoned the young French Queen of Spain. When Louis refused a regiment to Olympia's son, he entered the service of Austria, distinguishing himself greatly in his first campaign against the Turks in 1683. After, in 1688, he had won increased renown and been made a major-general at the siege of Belgrade, Louvois ordered home, on pain of banishment, all Frenchmen serving in foreign armies. Eugène, however, refused to consider himself as a Frenchman or to return to France, saying that he would do the latter only when he chose, at the head of an army. When the Duke of Savoy invaded France in 1692, Eugène, serving under his relative, was enabled to keep his promise.

Louis XIV. now offered Eugène, who had become a Field Marshal, the highest honours to enter his service; these offers were again rejected, and after, in 1697, gallantly defeating the Turks at Zentha, the Prince combined with Marlborough to humble the pride of Louis XIV. in the War of the Spanish Succession, between 1702 and 1711.

In Italy he defeated the Maréchal de Catinat; the vainglorious Duc de Villeroi he defeated at Chiari, and

captured, subsequently, in his sleeping-attire at Cremona; while against that sleepy bon-vivant the Duc de Vendôme he fought a bloody drawn battle at Luzara in August, 1702. After sharing with Marlborough on August 13th, 1704, the glories of Blenheim, Prince Eugène found the tables turned upon him by Vendôme at Cassano. In this battle, which took place on August 16th, 1705, Eugène was twice wounded. He had, however, a glorious revenge at Turin a year later, failed to take Toulon in 1707, but helped Marlborough at Oudenarde, Lille, and Malplaquet, all victories over the French. In the last-named action, fought on September 11th, 1709, the defeated French infantry made their name as glorious as did the English infantry at the battle of Fontenoy nearly forty years later.

After the Treaty of Rastadt in 1714 secured that peace between France and Austria which England had arranged in the previous year by the Treaty of Utrecht, Eugène recommended Austria to join Venice against his old enemies the Turks, whom he defeated, again in the month of August, in the year 1716, with immense slaughter at Peterwardein. Perhaps the greatest feat of renown for which the name of the gallant Eugène will ever remain famous was the battle which he fought once more near Belgrade and once more in his usually lucky month. On August 16th, 1717, he was assailed by the Turks with forces six times as many as his own, but inflicted upon them the greatest defeat which they ever experienced, and on the 22nd he took the city, but was again wounded.

The last time upon which we shall find Eugène pitted against the French is upon the Rhine, in the War of the Polish Succession in 1734. By that time, however, his

own inclinations were rather inclined to the side of France, since he saw the error of Austria in encouraging the growth of Prussia, and had already strongly urged a French alliance, very possibly as a result of the instigations of the Countess Batthyàny, after she had been gained by Richelieu. Whatever the cause, Eugène did not act with his old energy against France in this campaign, and, while there was not much fighting, made no efforts to bring about a pitched battle. The heir-apparent to the Prussian Crown, afterwards to become Frederick II. and The Great of Prussia, had his baptism of fire under him in this campaign, the young Prince having enrolled himself as a volunteer and being present with the great Savoyard commander at Philipsburg.

Eugène, who was of a poetic and artistic frame of mind, fostered the arts of literature and science almost as much as those of war. The personal friend of Leibnitz, he frequently corresponded with Montesquieu and other philosophers, while he himself made collections of books, manuscripts, and, above all, pictures. This great man, one of the five greatest Generals who ever lived, was found dead in his bed in Vienna on April 21st, 1736, after an evening passed peaceably in playing piquet, and sixteen Field Marshals carried his coffin to the tomb. No legitimate offspring survived him, as he was never married, but he was supposed to be the father of two sons by the beautiful Countess Batthyàny.

Such, then, is a brief epitome of the career of one against whom Richelieu found it necessary to pit his wits in whatever way he could. While enjoying himself with the Countess Batthyàny, and making use of her, the Duc had during his mission to undergo many a *mauvais quart d'heure*. "The Emperor," according to

one of the Duc's letters to the witty Cardinal de Polignac, "under the pretext of invitations to chapel, causes himself to be followed about by the Ambassadors as if they were his *valets de chambre*. None but a Capuchin of the healthiest constitution could survive such a life during Lent! Just to give your Eminence an idea: I have been, since Palm Sunday until the Wednesday after Easter, an hundred hours in Church with the Emperor—an enforced devotion which is unheard of in any Court in the world, and of which I cannot prevent myself from giving to your Eminence a touch of my ill-humour."

Polignac wrote back to congratulate Richelieu upon having survived the sacred duties of Holy Week, saying, "Perhaps you have never done so much before in all your life. Imagine yourself exactly the same as a Cardinal when at Rome. It is true, however, that we are paid for it."

From the Ministers of the Emperor Richelieu received many humiliations. Nor, although Prince Eugène commenced to treat him with a friendliness which he scarcely deserved, was the great General himself well regarded by these Ministers, who were jealous of his influence. Especially were they averse to Eugène, because he was advising the Emperor to listen to one of the propositions of the ambitious Queen of Spain. This was that he should unite in marriage his two daughters, the Archduchesses Maria Theresa and Maria Eleonora, to the two Infantes her sons. Since Richelieu, on behalf of France, was equally averse to the idea that these daughters of a Power then hostile to France should be united to Spain, there were thus wheels within wheels which made it very difficult to steer a straight course.

He therefore continued to steer a crooked one, and, careless of the feelings of the Countess Batthyàny, the intimate of the Prince, contrived to enter into a fresh liaison with the Princess von Lichtenstein, who was very *liée* with the Ministers. He thus soon had a female friend in both camps in the Austrian Court. Indeed, it would seem as if the Princess, who was *très grande dame*, herself gave to the young Ambassador the opportunity of talking to her—about affairs—a conversation which led to others. During a grand sleighing party given by the Emperor, this lady fell to Richelieu's lot, to drive in his own magnificent sledge, when she opened the ball by asking him, in an apologetic manner, if he would mind her giving him a few counsels, as a friend.

Naturally, Richelieu did not mind in the least, whereupon the Princess informed him that France was making a great mistake in assuming a humble attitude in the negotiations; that what she had to do, if she required peace, was to make a show of arming. It was, in fact, in the sense of the old Latin proverb, "Si vis pacem para bellum," that the Princess von Lichtenstein addressed Richelieu.

These views were exactly those held by the Duc himself, and he now urged them so strongly upon Fleury that the pacific and economical Bishop of Fréjus took his advice. Shortly afterwards he was able to maintain boldly to the Emperor, who menaced him with war, that France was quite ready to face hostilities, and that she had merely entered into negotiations to avoid the effusion of blood—it was not, however, men nor money that were wanting.

After thus boldly asserting himself, Richelieu (and the interests of France through him), received more

consideration. He naturally thought it only right to thank the Princess Lichtenstein for his success, but one evening, going to do so in disguise, and on foot, just as he was about to enter by a side door, upon which he had given three mysterious taps, he had a disagreeable misadventure.

Three half-drunken members of his own suite, seeing a mysterious person who seemed to wish to avoid observation, commenced to insult him. Finding it impossible to escape from them, the Duc, losing his temper, struck them violently with his stick. The drunkards then shouted for the watch, and made so much noise that people, running up on all sides, attempted to arrest the man whom they said had assaulted them. At length Richelieu was compelled to make himself known to his followers. This made things worse than ever. The three rascals, falling upon their knees, loudly commenced to call him "Monseigneur," and to beg for mercy. At length the young Ambassador got away somehow, but he was obliged to reserve his thanks to the Princess von Lichtenstein until another and more auspicious occasion.

Eventually, at the beginning of 1728, the nomination for the *cordon bleu* arrived for Richelieu at Vienna; when, for sponsors in the investiture, he had the honour of having the Prince Eugène and Graf von Seckendorf, the Emperor's Chancellor. He had not yet reached the age of thirty-two, while the rule of the *Ordre du Saint Esprit* was that it should not be granted to any noble before thirty-five. He was thus the recipient of a most unusual honour, which was repeated, with all the full ceremonies at Versailles, after his return at the beginning of the following year.

By that time all apparent danger of war with Austria and Spain had been cleared away, and the profligate courtier, tired of the caresses of the ladies of Vienna, was only too pleased to be able to return to receive the felicitations of those of Paris upon the results of his Embassy.

The Princess von Lichtenstein, however, parted with him in grief and tears, the Countess Batthyàny also expressed her sorrow, but Prince Eugène did not prove over-cordial in the manner in which he took leave of the departing Richelieu. He had, it appears, some time earlier made up his mind that the gay Ambassador of France was to be seen a great deal too often in the drawing-rooms of the Countess

CHAPTER VII

The Trials of Marie Lesczynska

1725—1768

As the young Louis XV. grew up, his health, originally so weak, gradually improved, and he became more good-looking daily until, at the age of seventeen, he was reckoned the most handsome young man in the kingdom. His education having, however, been purposely neglected by Fleury, he was in the greatest state of ignorance, notably so in all matters pertaining to the government of the State.

Fleury had, however, taken particular pains to have him instructed so as to have the blindest faith in matters of religion; he had been often, indeed, frightened in his childish years with pictures of the devil, of hell, and of death. These impressions never left him through life; even in his most libertine moments in his later years he would instruct in religion the poor young girls whom he had debauched, after having torn them from their homes or bought them for his pleasures. There was thus a perpetual combat apparent in his mind throughout his life between the religious instruction he had received and his evil passions. Especially did the fear of death trouble him, as he showed notably upon various occasions in his career; while even to

hear of the death of any noble of the Court, or any of his friends, disturbed his peace of mind.

As in his childhood, so he grew up to man's estate, taciturn, reserved, concentrated in himself. With women in general he continued for the first five years after his marriage to maintain an attitude of nervous timidity. With the exception of the motherly Comtesse de Toulouse, who was Marie Victoire, sister of the Maréchal Duc de Noailles, he never felt at home in their society; only with her he was at his ease—and more than at his ease.

For in spite of her age, her decent *tenue*, and the observances of devotion which were regular at her semi-Court at Rambouillet, all historians unite in saying that the Comtesse de Toulouse it was who first instructed the young Monarch in the meaning of the verb to love. She became a widow, for the second time, just at the period of the young man's life when he was commencing to realise that it was not a verb that he could conjugate with the Queen. His cousin Mademoiselle de Charolais succeeded, by her unremitting attentions, in leading the King still further astray.

Of the Queen it was said that he became the father of her numerous children—mostly girls—without ever speaking to her. This was partly owing to the timid nature of Marie Lesczynska herself. Thus, from the beginning, each treated the other coldly and with ceremony, and the more so from the fact of the rebuffs which the Queen received from Fleury, causing her to shrink within herself. She was not inclined to ask anything more from the King from the day when, having vainly begged for some favour for M. de Nangis, a member of her household, he had, upon her complaining

to him of the fact of Fleury's refusal, replied, "Do as I do, ask nothing of the Cardinal." It was as much as to say that it was Fleury who was King, not himself. What hurt the gentle-minded Marie still more was the roughly worded note written to her after the occasion when she had combined with M. le Duc against Fleury, whereupon the preceptor had run away to Issy. This note merely said, "You will execute the Cardinal's orders!" She was just beginning to hope to live, and love, for the King was the object of her greatest admiration, when her spirits were thus crushed.

The Queen was not, moreover, in herself naturally inclined to be prudish; on the contrary, she was fond of lively company, while far livelier stories were, according to d'Argenson, related in her presence than would be considered at all proper nowadays. Towards the King, however, she schooled herself to act with a studied obedience and indifference; the more so that an old Jesuit, her confessor, had foolishly indoctrinated her with the idea that heaven would be displeased if she showed too much that was really womanly in the intimate relations of life. She, therefore, instead of endeavouring to attract her youthful husband by feminine coquetry, on the contrary, put all such things from her, in the fear that earthly desires and satisfactions should make her lose a heavenly crown.

Her character upon all matters became of an equal reserve, and, after her rebuffs, she no longer sought to take any interest in the affairs of the State. Further, she forbade the persons of her household to solicit anything, any more than she did so herself, while she maintained an air of general tranquillity and decency which never gave the world occasion to talk lightly about her in

anyway. Moreover, owing to her bringing up, the Queen hated extravagance, and was fond of doing charitable deeds. She liked to save, and did not mind privations if by them she could do good with her savings. With this object in view, she looked upon the expenses of her household as a charge upon the State which was much to be regretted, and would often inquire, "How much did this cost?" While all others about the Court merely looked upon the lower orders as an evil, necessary to be endured as the means of production of money for the *noblesse*, Marie Lesczynska held opposite views, and would exclaim, "Money is the product of the sweat of the people's brow." Never was the old adage, "Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride to the devil," more falsified than in the case of this amiable Polish woman. Out of the money which she received for her allowance for private purposes, she annually set apart some for the poor, gave dowries to indigent young ladies, donations to wounded officers, assisted the education of youth, the apprenticing of young men to the trades, established homes for the Savoyard street porters and workmen of Paris, while causing also schools and working-classes to be formed and supported in the country villages. Had her successor as Queen, the giddy Austrian Princess, Marie Antoinette, but shown one tithe of the solicitude for her people that did Marie, the history of France would probably have nowadays to be written differently, with the bloody episodes of the Revolution left out. Unfortunately, she, on the contrary, remained wholly taken up with her pleasures and excitements while the people were starving, with the result that, after being mainly instrumental in causing her husband's head to fall, she lost her own.

Had but Marie Lesczynska enjoyed her husband's love, or possessed the power to rule him of Marie Antoinette to rule Louis XVI., there would have been a very different state of affairs existing in France before ever the well-meaning, but stupid and wife-governed, grandson of Louis XV. ascended the throne. But she enjoyed none of that influence. Fleury had seen to that!

In personal appearance, while not handsome, Marie was pleasant to look at. When upon horseback she became handsome, her beautiful figure was then seen to its full advantage. The mistresses of Louis XV. were well aware of this fact, and, accordingly, no sooner did their reign commence, with Madame de Mailly, the first of the four de Nesle sisters who were to succeed or run contemporaneously with each other, than her appearances on horseback were restricted, since it caused themselves to show to a disadvantage.

The jealous malice of the mistresses went further than this. In a time when it was customary for the *Académie Française* to celebrate in flowery language the virtues of the worst conducted members of the Royal family, no literary gem was ever allowed to sparkle with the praises of the one occupant of the throne who deserved the nation's admiration—the good-hearted, downtrodden, neglected Marie Lesczynska. No wonder if, towards the end of her days, the nature of this excellent Princess became somewhat soured and embittered. Victim of the disgraceful vices of her husband, living in a Court to witness shameful harlotry flaunting openly, and its absolute usurpation of her own position and rights, she was also witness of the miseries of the people that she loved. These she knew chiefly to be caused by the extravagance or the ambition of

the courtesans who reigned, and who had secured their positions by their own calculated and meretricious arts.

These women, some of them chosen from among her own ladies-of-honour, the unhappy Queen had to meet at every turn; she was compelled to be civil to them when they attended upon her person, coming into her presence frequently from the very arms of the King. No wonder if she is reported as having frequently shed torrents of tears, as having been in the habit of prostrating herself for hours at a time before her crucifix, while offering up her sorrows to her Maker as a sacrifice. Only too well did she see in the life of the King the source of the calamities of France, not only in the present, but to come.

With a prophetic eye she realised that heaven, at present abandoning the King, would also abandon the kingdom in the future. Thus did Marie Lesczynska pass her days in tears, moanings, and vain repinings, while ardently praying for the King's conversion. Unhappy Queen! one's heart bleeds for her. Truly the Providence which elevated her to the throne treated her more than ordinarily unkindly; she had better by far have been left in obscurity, to have been married to the simple Colonel, the Comte d'Estrées, to whom her father, Stanislas of Poland, had once been willing to unite her.

While thus weeping at the foot of her cross, it must not be imagined that the character of the Polish Princess was such that she was unable to give vent to her pique, should she so choose, in no other way. Far from this, her powers of conversation, of expressing herself wittily and bitterly, were sufficient whenever she chose to let her tongue express what she thought. And, since even a worm will turn, so did Marie Lesczynska occasionally

exert her powers of sarcasm. When we consider that, before her death in 1768, she had seen no less than six women publicly at the Court as her husband's acknowledged favourites, one of whom lasted for ten and another for twenty years in her presence, it would have been a marvel indeed had the Queen done otherwise. Like the Regent before him, not only was the King, let us hope wrongly, accused of too great an intimacy during his drunken fits with some of his own daughters, but he maintained the horrible pleasure-house presented to him by Madame de Pompadour, called the *Parc aux Cerfs*. In this he installed woman after woman of the lower orders, for a day, week, or month or two.

Let us see, however, who were those loves of Louis, miscalled the Well-Beloved, who, belonging to the nobility, polluted the precincts of the Palace before the twenty years of the *bourgeoise* Mademoiselle Poisson, who became Marquise de Pompadour, and her successor, Dubarry, this latter a low woman from the dregs of the people.

There were four of them, all sisters, and there would have been five, save for the fact that Hortense Félicité, the fifth, preferred to remain faithful to her husband, the Marquis de Flavacourt—a good and worthy soldier. These four, all daughters of the ultra-gallant Madame de Nesle, wife of the third Marquis Louis de Nesle, were—

1. Louise Julie, born 1710, who married her cousin Louis Alexandre de Mailly in 1726, and died in 1751.

2. Pauline Félicité, who espoused Félix de Vintimille, and died in 1741.

3. Diane Adélaïde, born in 1714, and married Louis de Brancas, Duc de Lauraguais.

4. Marie Anne, married in 1734 the Marquis de la

Tournelle, who died in 1740. She survived him four years, and was made the Duchesse de Châteauroux by the King, with a great flourish of trumpets in the patent creating her peeress and duchesse of France—on account of her virtues! This patent, presented to the Parliament by the King, that body was obliged to register tamely.

Madame de Flavacourt, who refused to become one of the incestuous gang, came between Madame de Lauraguais and the Duchesse de Châteauroux; she was a celebrated beauty, and much sought after by the King.

Of these four charming creatures, one alone, Madame de Mailly, after she had sold herself on account of her poverty, showed that she possessed a heart. Cold at first, she became ardently attached to the King, while she remained disinterested and anxious for his welfare in every way. Her reward was to be sent away in poverty, after having had to witness the King's infidelity to her with one of her sisters, who deliberately supplanted her.

It will be remembered that the Marquise de Nesle, mother of these sisters, was one of those who had been appointed *dame du palais* to the Queen on her marriage. By birth she was Mademoiselle de la Porte-Mazarin. Marie Lesczynska, who did not approve of this lady's mode of behaviour, somewhat maliciously found means to prevent her from leaving her presence upon various occasions when she was going off to some giddy fête. She then caused her lady-of-the-palace to sit down and read to her books from which she might possibly derive some edification—such as the *Imitation of Christ*, the *History of France*, or the Gospels. Madame de Nesle died in 1729, before any of her young and enterprising

daughters had attracted the attention of the youthful King. She herself only lived to be thirty-nine.

Two instances of the Queen's smartness of tongue have been recorded; both at the time that Madame de Mailly, the first of the Nesle favourites, had been recently elevated to that unenviable distinction.

The old Princesse de Conti was, with justice, suspected by the outraged wife of lending her protection to the intrigue, to which she gave countenance by her frequent presence at parties of pleasure with the King and his *inamorata*. In her anger against this Princesse of the Blood-Royal, with whose history she was well acquainted, Marie Lesczynska gave vent to a biting sarcasm which, when repeated throughout the Court, made its subject wince: "Un vieux cocher aime encore à entendre claquer le fouet."

Upon another occasion it was Madame de Mailly herself who was made to feel the lash in a witty *mot*. Having, in her quality of lady-of-honour, respectfully requested the Queen's permission about some matter, she received for reply, "Comment, oubliez-vous donc que vous êtes la maîtresse?"

In these little ways, thus, the Queen occasionally allowed herself the satisfaction of a trifling vengeance, and then only for a time, after which she became silently contemptuous. As the nocturnal orgies of the King increased in frequency, she became tired of giving permission of absence to such of her ladies as were bidden to them; nor would she exact the presence of the other ladies who came voluntarily to replace the absentees in their duties about her person. She gave, therefore, a general permission of absence to all who pleased to go to the *petits soupers des cabinets*, or anywhere



From an engraving after the picture by J. M. Nattier.

MARIE LESCZYNSKA, PRINCESS OF POLAND AND QUEEN OF FRANCE.

else they might choose. She preferred the absence of nearly all to their presence, and contented herself with the society of an excellent woman, the Duchesse de Luynes, also of Mesdames d'Ancenis, de Rupelmonde, and one or two others, with whom she would sup in a modest manner, after which the ladies amused themselves by reading. These modest reunions were sneered at by the libertine Court, which called them "the holy week," but they formed an exemplary contrast to the *petits cabinets* of the King.


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CHAPTER VIII

The Affaire Cadière

1730—1732

THE *leit motif* of which the refrain runs through the whole of the reign of Louis XV. may be said to be the murmur—by no means harmonious—of the struggles between the magistracy and the clergy. The kingdom was continually disturbed by contests between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, growing out of attempts on the part of the clergy to enforce the Papal Bull *Unigenitus*, which were resisted by the Parliaments of Paris and the provinces. Although, chiefly owing to the instances of the Duc de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour, who hated them, the King was at length induced to banish the Jesuits, in the meantime their perpetual dissensions with the Jansenists had greatly embittered the conflict. This, towards the end of the reign, became merged in the struggles between the King and the Parliaments, in which the Royal authority was finally triumphant. It was, however, but a transient triumph for the Royalty, for already could be heard the distant murmurings of the Revolution when Louis XV. died in May, 1774.

In the year 1730 the power of the priesthood was so great, headed as it was by Fleury, that it may be truly

said to have represented both the State and the Government. The King himself was but a puppet in the hands of the clergy, who ruled Fleury, as we have already seen.

Although they do not appear much upon the surface, there were potentates of very great power in France, in the shape of two *valets de chambre.* These were Bachelier, belonging to the King, and Barjac, in whose possession the Cardinal considered himself fortunate.

There seems to have been no rivalry between the couple, who, indeed, worked together under Fleury, to whom the Sieur Bachelier, as he became, remitted the compromising correspondence that he found at nights in the King's pockets. Yet these two both recognised that there were greater than they in the kingdom; the old Barjac said, of the out-and-out ultramontane papists, "If we don't let them loose they will devour us ourselves."

Cardinal Fleury knew well this fact, and, too feeble to resist, was constantly trotting backwards and forwards to the establishment at Issy, to take the orders of his spiritual director Couturier. The result of these visits was made clearly evident when, upon April 3rd, 1730, a great event happened, the greatest triumph for the ultramontane party in twenty years.

On that day, with the greatest ceremony, accompanied by many troops, the twenty-year-old King was led in person to the Parliament of Paris to enforce the registering of the Bull—an action which that Jansenistical body had refused to perform in the teeth of his great-grandfather the Grand Monarque.

There was a calculated provocation in this challenge, thrown by the clergy to the magistracy, the men of the robe, who were popularly supposed to be the guardians

of the Regal rights. The outrage—felt throughout all France—was intended to exasperate them beyond all measure, cause them to revolt, to make a new Fronde, and stir up the populace by the unruly attitude which they might assume. By these mutinous actions the King and Fleury would both become alarmed—they would then suppress the Parliament of Paris by force. That was the plan, although it was not avowed.

The King, in haughty style, accomplished his mission. Not deigning to speak himself, he stood by while the Chancellor read out words to the effect that "since the Bull had force and authority *of itself*, it was not the King who imposed it." The Parliament trembled. One old magistrate, nearly ninety years of age, fell upon his knees before the handsome young King, but was not allowed to speak. Only forty out of the two hundred *conseillers* present would vote for the registration, but these forty votes were declared to be the majority by that formerly staunch Jansenist, the Chancellor d'Aguesseau.

All throughout this year of 1730 there was a cabal, headed by that person devoid of morality, the Dowager Duchesse de Bourbon, to supply this handsome young King, now twenty years of age, with a mistress who would counteract the influence of Fleury, and restore that of M. le Duc. It was now sought to carry out this plan; the infamous Madame la Duchesse seeking to supply the young second wife of her son for that purpose.

The banishment of M. le Duc had been revoked in 1729, after the death of Madame de Prie, and he had taken a second wife. She was a Savoyard Princess, being sister of the young King of Sardinia, whose father, Duke of Savoy until 1718, had recently abdicated. She was the

granddaughter of the celebrated "Madame," sister of Charles II. of England and first wife of the father of the Regent, who was supposed to have met her death by poison sent by the Chevalier de Lorraine. The young Duchesse de Bourbon was a very pretty and attractive woman, to whose society the King had shown a marked partiality. Her mother-in-law, the mother of the unprincipled Mademoiselle de Charolais, had absolutely no scruples where the King was concerned. She had already accepted as a present for her daughter-in-law some very valuable diamonds from the King, of which she intended to keep her own share, when Fleury got an inkling of the affair, in which, by the way, the part played by M. le Duc is uncertain. The Cardinal was justly frightened, however, and with the more reason since there were other plots being woven against him, and by persons in the most intimate daily communion with the King.

M. de Chauvelin, the Keeper of the Seals, was a man of great energy and capacity; he was, moreover, very artful. Unable openly to combat the womanly rule of Fleury, he formed the design of letting the King know, through his boyish comrades, how incapable the Cardinal really was. The young Duc de Gesvres was the nephew of the Cardinal de Rohan, the friend of Fleury, and was, therefore, above suspicion. This effeminate youth was, however, as capable of holding the threads of a plot as those of the tapestry work which he delighted in weaving.

One day, accordingly, he allowed the King, as if by chance, to see him with a paper, which he pretended to hide. Louis, becoming curious, could not obtain it without an effort, when it was found to be a very clever and

pungent exposition of all the Cardinal's weak points. Above all, the King understood with terror as he read it that the action of the Cardinal with regard to the Parliament was such as was likely to bring about a state of civil war. He took a copy of the paper before he returned it to Gesvres.

After this the King went to bed, forgetting the copy of the memorial in his pockets. Bachelier, feeling through these, found it, read it, and took it straight to Fleury.

Never was the King seen weaker than at this moment! Fleury attacked him upon the subject of his continuing to hold friendly relations with the youths whose conduct had already been condemned. He terrified the King, who, after prevaricating and lying, gave up both Gesvres and d'Epernon to the Cardinal, who forced him to sign their exile for two years.

Fleury now changed the locks of the King's apartments, and kept duplicate keys for himself and any one whom he might wish to use as a spy. At the same time he rewarded Bachelier. The *valet de chambre* was made a seigneur, the Intendant of Marly and of the Trianon. In spite of this treachery on behalf of his domestic, Louis retained him about his person as before, and apparently without resentment.

After this Barjac, the Cardinal's *valet de chambre*, became the most courted man in the kingdom. While nightly now the courtiers thronged to the Cardinal's bed-goings, his valet was beset by applicants for favours. He had in effect the disposition of all the important places in France, made farmers-general or appointed to any office he pleased. In speaking, Barjac would say, "We will do this"; "We cannot allow that"; or, "I

have finished the affair." Such was the manner of the government of the country of France!

It is in vain that the methods of government of the Cardinal have been called "gentle and moderate," for that they were not. The press was gagged, forty-eight learned doctors were sent away to prison from the Sorbonne, every voice was stifled, while the terror of the Protestants, attacked by the clergy with troops in this year 1730, was aggravated. The word "relapse," of which M. le Duc had removed the principal terrors, was now openly pronounced with its whole fell significance, for it carried with it a sentence of death.

It was while things were in this stifled condition that a circumstance took place, a voice arose away in the south, which was the cause of great disturbance, and rightly ended in the utter disrepute of the Jesuit faction. In fact it did more, for so strong was the voice of public opinion that the priesthood were in the end debarred from ever obtaining that which was the cause of their conflict with the magistracy—a Church Court of their own, which should make them independent of the lay tribunals of the Parliaments and the law. It was not, however, until after a violent struggle and the most cruel injustice had for a time seemed to show the Church as supreme, that at last Versailles yielded and made the clergy remain for ever subject to lay justice.

In the year 1731 the mockers of Paris listened and scoffed as they heard the news which filtered through from Toulon and Aix, cities of Provence; the latter, the seat of the Provençal Parliament. The Jesuists, as a counter-blast to the Jansenist miracles said to have taken place at the tomb of the recluse Pâris, had manufactured a miracle of their own!

In Toulon, Mademoiselle Cadière, being brought up in a convent under the spiritual direction of an elderly and ill-looking priest named Girard, became stigmatised. In imitation of Christ, the marks of whose wounds she bore upon her person, the blood fell continually from her forehead, wounded by the crown of thorns—she was a saint! No sooner had this startling news arrived when it was followed by the intelligence that the saint was about to become a mother, and not she alone, but many others—merchants' daughters, ladies, and work-girls.

The Jansenists now violently declared that the action of Girard, in taking advantage of these innocent young women under his direction, proved him to be a sorcerer, a wizard. It was, they maintained, only by the use of the black art that this Jesuit, old and ugly, could have prevailed over so many victims. He was, they said, another Gauffridi—"Prince of the Magicians," the spiritual director burned at Marseilles by the Parliament of Provence in 1610. Like him, Girard should perish at the stake for witchcraft; as, under similar conditions, had the priest Urbain Grandier at Loudun in 1634, and the Vicaire Picart, who, with the already dead Père Boullé, was burned by the Fronde about 1649. All of these spiritual directors had taught too freely to their patients the tenets of Illuminism and Molinism: "The body cannot stain the soul. One must, by the sin which renders humble and cures pride, kill sin!"

Having already (in *Louis XIV. in Court and Camp*) related at length all the details of these separate affairs, as well as explained the doctrines of Quietism, Illuminism, and Molinism, which were productive in the convents of such evil results, only a word is here necessary

in referring to them. While the nuns, a whole convent full at Louviers, who were the victims, became hysterical and fraudulent, and pretended to have been bewitched, upon each occasion one particular nun was made the scapegoat, at the same time that the greatest efforts were made to save the priests. The unfortunate girls underwent untold horrors: being stripped and stuck all over with needles to find the witch's mark, and subjected to such terrifying tortures as to be shut up with dead men's bones in a charnel house, or left without clothing in underground sewers full of rats!

Instead of it being admitted that the horrible debauchery which had taken place was but the result of the wickedness of the director, it was sought to prove that the girl it was who was possessed, and had cast her spell over the priest.

To prove this in the case of Father Gauffridi—the "Prince of the Magicians"—Father Michaëlis, the Pope's Inquisitor at Avignon, declared, after examining his quite young victim Madeleine de la Palud, that he had, by exorcism, drawn out from her no less than six thousand six hundred devils, at one time, in a gluey mass!

A similar reply was that made by the Jesuits who defended Father Girard. They admitted the sorcery, but said that it was the young saint of the miracle, Mademoiselle Cadière, who had put the devil into Girard.

The whole of Provence divided itself furiously into two parties. In the cities, those against the priest flooded the streets with comic literature, songs, and pamphlets. In Paris there was an echo of the songs, which derided the Jesuits, and which, while vulgar and ribald, concealed a danger. In the south, at Marseilles and elsewhere, such was the excitement that

crowds of hundreds of thousands collected while the trial progressed.

At first people had laughed on learning that the Jesuits intended to cap one crime with another; the laugh, however, turned to a thrill of horror when it became known that, before the very Parliament of Aix, the people of the King proposed to strangle, not Girard, but the maiden whom he had outraged!

While the world shuddered it also became instructed, with a sudden revelation, of the evils which in almost a century had been forgotten. Mademoiselle Cadière was a weakly and not by any means strong-minded girl, there was, therefore, nothing marvellous in the fact that Girard should have won her to his will; but what astonished the world was the fact of the immense power given to the priest by the mystical jargon of Illuminism, a power by which, in only six months, Girard had made victims of his penitents in all directions.

Much—too much—became known concerning the interior of the Convent d'Ollioules, where Mademoiselle Cadière was kept concealed by Girard: the manners of the rich abbess, the rich ladies who visited the convent, the monks who met them there, the nuns under the abbess,—all these became the subject of universal comment.

The Bishop of Toulon, who was an honest man, at first made a determined effort to save Mademoiselle Cadière. The Jesuits, however, frightened him with a threat of bringing a shameful accusation against him. The Bishop then joined her enemies, and, in company with the judge, subjugated the *Lieutenant Civil*, who represented the King, to whom "la" Cadière appealed for justice and mercy in vain.

The other women who were in the same plight as the poor girl herself were brought to testify against her, and say that Girard was possessed by her, that she alone was answerable for his actions; while the nuns of Ollioules were threatened with the torture unless they spoke as they were told to. All this became publicly known, and also the fact that, on account of her clear, straightforward answers, a poisonous drug was forced down the throat of the poor innocent, which affected her senses so that for three days she did not know what she was saying, and contradicted herself.

Being afraid of Paris, the Jesuits endeavoured to get two *Commissaires* from the Parliament of Aix to come to Toulon and complete the preparation of the case. They came, with permission of the Chancellor d'Aguesseau—a Jansenist, and formerly an honest man but who had weakened lately—and actually lodged in the quarters of the Jesuits themselves. What chance was there for the poor girl? The two *Commissaires* found that there was sufficient evidence against her to send on the case to the Parliament of Aix.

All the great ladies of that city were for the Jesuits, who were their confessors. It was a simple matter for Girard to prove that he had only followed the tenets of Illuminism, of the high mysticism of Molinos, greatly approved by the Jesuits. It was, he maintained, the right and the duty of the confessor to shut himself up with and discipline his penitent, and only lay ignorance could question that right. Whatever might be found indecent or impure was recommended as the effort of obedient humility to break down pride and the will. Without referring to ancient books, he had only to refer to the book of the day to prove this—a book recently

dedicated to the Queen by the Bishop who wrote it, and generally highly approved.

In this, the Life of Marie Alacoque, obedience was preached at every line as superior to every other virtue. It was distinctly laid down that Jesus said, "Prefer the will of thy superiors to Mine," "Obey them before Me." That meant, obey the priest before the God whom he pretends to serve. This Marie Alacoque was a Burgundian nun of a convent of the *Sacré Cœur* at Paray. She also was a miracle-worker, since her heart actually became joined to that of Christ, after which she was united in marriage to Jesus, signing the marriage contract with her own blood. This occurred in 1675, and great events followed upon that marriage, which we have described in *Louis XIV. in Court and Camp* (p. 217 *et seqq.*).

The great ladies of Provence—and it is a picture of the power of the priesthood—instead of feeling pity for the victims of Father Girard, considered them highly honoured—especially, it would seem, Mademoiselle Cadière. "What!" they exclaimed, "even if the good Père Girard did honour her so much as to indulge in certain intimacies with her, she has been very daring to be wanting in respect to her director—to the order of the Jesuits. She is only a monster fit for stifling." The influence of these women carried the verdict in the Parliament of Aix. She was condemned "to be hanged and strangled at Toulon"; her brothers who had supported her were ordered to be criminally proceeded against, also the lawyer who had defended her, he having been officially ordered to do so.

The people rose in hundreds of thousands, rushed to the prison, shouting, "Be not frightened, mademoiselle. We are here; they shall not strangle you."

Hereupon the terrified Parliament, in which were many Jansenist members, took courage, and some of these magistrates declared that Père Girard was worthy of death—worthy of the fire! In their excess of zeal, in persisting in thus looking upon Girard as a sorcerer, a wizard, these Jansenists defeated themselves. They were merely laughed at for persisting in seeing the devil everywhere, the result of which was that many who were quite ready to hang Girard, rather than burn a man, retracted. His death was put to the vote before a special Court of twenty-five. Twelve of these voted for his death, twelve for his acquittal; the President gave his vote in his favour—Girard was saved. Girard and the President were, however, nearly torn to pieces by the infuriated people.

In the meantime the revised judgment had said that Mademoiselle Cadière should be restored to her mother. This was pure hypocrisy, since she was ordered at the same time to pay all the costs of the proceedings against herself. As a matter of fact the poor, unhappy girl never was returned to her mother at Toulon, where she would have received a triumph worthy of a Roman Emperor. The people waited for her, and burned Girard in effigy. But she never came—*she was never seen again!* The Jesuits had hidden her away somewhere in some horrible *in pace* below a convent—some cesspool or drain, whence the victim never reappeared.

Nor were there any Jesuits massacred. And yet in her horrible end, whatever it may have been, she conquered these. Even to the Parliament of Aix, which from the earliest times had shown a spirit of persecution, there came a revulsion of feeling, and with it reform. The full light of day, as distinguished from

the dark shadows of the silent convent, had been thrown athwart the dark paths of the Church by justice as administered in open court in the *affaire Cadière.*

From that moment the world became more curious as to what was contained between those sealed walls, where the little bones were suspected to lie whitening in heaps beneath the flags in the convent yard. They have been found since those days; but before the *affaire Cadière* the magistrates were not bold enough to face the Church. The judge, when his eyes fell upon those convent walls, discreetly looked the other way.

The clergy feared, however, that the time of further well-merited exposures would follow fast upon the heels of these terrible scandals which had become universally known to the world. Fleury was seventy-six years old; he could not, they imagined, live much longer: after him who knew what might happen? All the Parliaments were not, moreover, like those of Aix, which had favoured the massacre of the Vaudois or Waldenses in the days of François I. Before no other Parliament in France could Girard have escaped so lightly. Should some new shady affair arise, the priesthood would, they feared, find themselves at the mercy of the magistrates. Feverishly, accordingly, the clergy hurried up to put pressure upon the old Cardinal, to cause him to suppress the censors of their morals, to assure to themselves the sweets of untrammelled liberty.

The people understood their haste, and laughed and hooted. In Paris every Jesuit who passed in the street was mocked at, while the people called out, "Girard! there goes Girard!"

Notwithstanding this the Church seemed to triumph,

when, in 1732, the Parliament of Paris was humbled by the Cardinal, through the King.

The Sulpicians, whose house at Issy was greatly favoured by Fleury, had formed the plan to remove entirely from the Parliaments all jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters. To humiliate the Parliament of Paris, that body, to commence with, was ordered not to discuss in any form the question of the Bull. Thereupon the celebrated orator the Jansenist Abbé Pucelles, by his eloquent denunciations of despotism, aroused all his comrades, who drew up a memorial to the King.

In this appeal it was represented that the temporal power was directly established by God, and under the King, that the clergy had no right to interfere between Parliament and the King, since the canons of the Church only became laws of the State when clothed by the authority of the Sovereign. The memorial was ordered to be erased from the books, when, Maurepas arriving with a letter from the King, the Parliament refused to open it or take knowledge of its contents. Another letter was sent, with orders to read it or be treated as rebels. This was in the year 1731.

After long deliberation it was decided to open this letter, and, after doing so, to proceed in a body to the King at Marly, and humbly remonstrate with His Majesty. But it was only when the courageous Abbé Pucelles offered to go alone on this dangerous mission that his comrades said that they would not desert him.

The letter, when opened, was found to contain a sharp order from Louis XV. to leave all Church affairs alone.

Upon the arrival of the *conseillers* at Marly they were unable to see the King, but a personal altercation

took place between Pucelles and the Cardinal, in which the Abbé told Fleury boldly what may be expressed as "a few plain truths." Without beating about the bush, he told the Cardinal exactly what he thought of him and his behaviour.

Early in the following year, 1732, Fleury had his revenge. The King sent for the Parliament, whom Pucelles had again been animating to resistance. Upon arrival the magistrates were not allowed to speak a single word, but ordered merely to listen to the King's words. These, which were very violent, he read out of his hat. He then caused d'Aguesseau, who, with Maurepas, Chauvelin, Fleury, and the Duc d'Orléans, was present, to order the Parliament to wipe out from their records all traces of their recent deliberations.

The old Pucelles fell upon his knees and offered a memorial. This Maurepas snatched from his hand and tore to pieces, after which the King spoke again. "This is my will; do not force me to make you feel that I am master!"

The First President made a reply of about only ten words of regret that the King would not hear them, when the audience was ended, greatly to the satisfaction of Versailles.

In spite of this, in the month of December that same year, Versailles receded and yielded. Neither imprisonments, exiles, nor carryings off proving of any avail against the stubbornness of the Parliament, Versailles abandoned, under form of a reprieve, that which it had accorded to the clergy upon August 18th. This abandonment left the Church, after all, subject to the authority of the men of the robe.

CHAPTER IX

Louis's First Loves—and Belle-Isle

1732—1739

It was near the end of the year 1732 when Cardinal Fleury decided that it would be as well that Louis XV. should take a mistress, and that the lady should be of his own selection. After a consultation with Madame de Tencin, that old go-between of the days of the Regent, it was determined that this mistress should be the eldest daughter of the Nesle family. From the manner in which she subsequently comported herself, no better selection could have been made than that of Louise Julie, Comtesse de Mailly, who was married to her own first cousin.

The Cardinal arranged the matter as cheaply as he could with the lady's husband, giving to the needy Comte de Mailly the sum of 20,000 livres; and Madame de Mailly was brought by Bachelier, upon a cold winter's night, to meet the King in a dark entresol at Versailles.

According to the King's *valet de chambre*, Louis greeted with timidity the lady thus sold to meet her husband's necessities, while she herself was very unenthusiastic at this first interview, which was purely a cold-blooded affair of sale and barter.

The meetings were, however, continued. Since the

King was afraid to ask from the Cardinal the sum of 1,000 francs which, for a time at all events, he wished to present to Madame de Mailly upon each interview, he had recourse to Chauvelin. The Keeper of the Seals contrived, without the knowledge of Fleury, to obtain the necessary funds from some Government department, upon which account Chauvelin commenced to take a stronger position with Louis, while he also earned the gratitude of Louise Julie de Mailly. She and the King were both of the same age, twenty-two in 1732, and for three years the liaison was continued in secret, during which time she fell greatly in love with Louis, who, it will be remembered, was remarkably handsome.

Madame de Mailly was an excellent person, but no beauty. Tall and a brunette, she was thin, and showed evidences of the Italian blood she had inherited on the father's side in her very fine dark eyes, which were full of fire.

Fleury, who was kept well informed of all that took place in the King's *petits cabinets*, felt gratified with his selection of a favourite, and the succeeding years continued to show the discretion of her whom he had chosen as a means of baffling the plan of Madame la Duchesse.

The Comtesse was gentle, reserved, and timid. Without having the slightest pretensions of knowledge of State affairs, she was amusing, owing to her clever little sayings and joyous manners. A sure friend, she was incapable of deceit, and had a sympathetic manner. Strange to say, although living in the Court, she remained disinterested, was without personal ambition and unintriguing.

Perfectly content to love the King in secret, she never desired either to profit by her favour or to make it known. Madame la Duchesse, Madame de Tencin, and the valetry, Bachelier, le Bel, and Barjac, however, all took very good care to keep on friendly terms with the lady. The Duchesse, of course, only learned the secret when it was one no longer, which was in 1735. Then, for some reason, Fleury and his cabal thought it as well that the world should become aware that the place which women of all ages about the Court were striving to occupy was already held.

As if by an accident, one night, while the Comtesse was being conducted by Bachelier up a staircase, her hood was allowed to slip on one side when two ladies were passing. That was sufficient! all the world knew after that, that one of the Queen's ladies was not the plaything of a moment, but the King's acknowledged favourite.

The excuse which was given out for the King's open infidelity was a malady from which the Queen suffered, as a result of having, since her marriage to the fifteen-year-old boy, borne seven children with too great rapidity, and her consequent expressed disinclination to lead an intimate conjugal existence.

The Queen had, indeed, thrown every obstacle in the way of the King's approaching her apartments, especially when he had been drinking, which was a common occurrence. Then, if he presented himself after she was already in bed, she reproached the King with the smell of the wines of Champagne; whereas, if she had not already retired, the Queen took an unusually long time over her prayers, which would sometimes be continued until the King had fallen asleep.

Marie Lesczynska was thus the cause of her own downfall, although had those who followed Madame de Mailly but loved the Queen as well as did that unfortunate lady, the Queen would not have been so greatly to be pitied. Indeed, the interests of the Queen were always considered by the Comtesse, for which reason she fell in with the views of Chauvelin, and of all France, against Fleury with reference to the restoration of the King's father-in-law to his throne. Secretly she urged the King to the War of the Polish Succession.

Personally it was, however, but little which the Comtesse either sought for or obtained. The presents which the King gave her were modest for a King, more worthy, indeed, of some little *bourgeois* ; while she herself ran into debt for the expenses of entertaining him in her house.

After having been the beloved of the King for nine years, in 1741 she had, we are told, "neither silver flambeaux nor counters" to entertain Louis with when he came, but had always to borrow these from her neighbours. Things were different in the time of Pompadour ! That lady knew how to help herself with both hands, and how to help those whom she chose to with both hands also. She, however, was a mere *bourgeoise*—Miss Fish by name (Mademoiselle Poisson). Madame de Mailly came of one of the oldest families of France. With her it was a case of *noblesse oblige* !

It was not so, however, with the King. When he eventually sent Madame de Mailly away cruelly, as part of the bargain made with her sister, Madame de la Tournelle, he left her to pay her own debts. He was even mean enough to retain, for the benefit of two of the sisters, the blue silk sheets which the Comtesse had

worked for him with her own hands, and the materials for which he knew she owed and would be sued for. If, as well as being King of France, Louis XV. had happened to have possessed the instincts of a gentleman, he would, at all events, have paid that bill for the disinterested woman. Unfortunately, he was only King of France.

Thus was all the solicitude and affection which Madame de Mailly showered upon her Royal lover only met by the greatest ingratitude and neglect. From a worthless husband, a mere parasite, she fell into the hands of a worthless King, for whose sake she sacrificed all her womanly feelings when he turned his eyes upon her sisters, to be in the end driven from the Court like a pariah dog.

After she was first handed over to Louis in 1732, the Comte de Mailly soon astonished Versailles by appearing in a smart carriage. His wife's discretion was, however, so great that none knew whence he had obtained the funds which enabled him to exchange a *fiacre* for a gilded coach.

By the year 1739 Louis was tired of Madame de Mailly, who, nevertheless, still maintained her position at the Court without any apparent rival. The King was, however, in the habit of visiting Chantilly so often as to cause the greatest anxiety to Fleury, as also to M. le Duc, who was now excessively jealous of his young wife. Louis also was indulging in various escapades—visiting the opera balls and other places masked, running severe risks to his health from his excesses. These, indeed, resulted in his severe illness in 1738, when the Queen was advised by the scheming Madame de Tencin to arrange for a Council of Regency, chiefly of women, to be ready in case of the death of the Monarch. The Cardinal was

very ill at the same time, but France was not fated to be relieved of either Cardinal or King upon that occasion.

In her convent, the Abbaye de Port-Royal, there was a young lady weaving plans. This was a simple *pensionnaire*, Mademoiselle de Nesle; in this year, 1739, she was twenty-four years of age. This young lady's plans can be expressed in three words—to rule France!

She proposed to capture the King, and oust the Ministers and her sister for this purpose; and, since not only was she not good-looking, but positively ugly, it must be owned that her plan seemed a trifle doubtful. This is how she expressed her intention to her friend, the Chanoinesse Madame de Dray: "I will write letters upon letters to my sister Mailly—she is good, she will call me to her; I will make the King love me; I will hunt out Fleury and will govern France!"

"La" Nesle nearly succeeded in accomplishing all this before a dose of poison, administered by the priests, stopped a career which was just then more promising than ever. The Abbé Brissard, confidential man to the Cardinal's nephews, is said to have given the dose.

Although Pauline Félicité had no looks, she was much whiter than her sister Louise Julie; she also had something else which the other did not possess—strength of character. She knew well enough that she was ugly, but with an elevated genius, an inventive brain, a bold and decided manner and limitless impertinence, Pauline proposed to prevent the King from finding out that fact for himself. This she succeeded in doing.

Madame de Mailly did not see her sister's falseness at first. When she did so, and discovered that the petulant, audacious, and *spirituel* conversation of that young lady had bewitched the King, it was too late to

send her away again. For a short time she struggled, when Louis first proposed that she should bring her sister to the *petits soupers* in the *petits cabinets*. Then, for sheer love of the King, to whom she could refuse nothing, she did not refuse him her own sister.

There were now two of them at the Court, and the King soon determined to find a husband for the last arrival, so that the intention of his assiduities to the sister of his acknowledged mistress might be covered with the cloak of decency, even more than it was by the complaisant Desmoiselles de Charolais and de Clermont, Princesses of the Blood.

The selected husband was a young fellow, Félix de Vintimille, son of the Comte du Luc, and nephew of Vintimille du Luc, Archbishop of Paris.

This Prelate performed the marriage, the whole proceedings in connection with which, and the subsequent retirement to Madrid, the château of Madame la Duchesse, were a farce for which the Archbishop was very largely paid. At Madrid the King attended and pretended to act the part of best man in putting the husband to bed. In the presence of a bevy of great ladies who had consented to attend the farce, the King did to the bridegroom the great honour of presenting him with the *chemise*. On the morrow every one about the Court said, however, that instead of it having been the King who went back to La Muette, it was the young bridegroom who occupied His Majesty's coach, while Louis himself remained to enjoy the hospitality of the Condé ladies at Madrid.

From the date of that marriage Louis gave himself up entirely to his love for Madame de Vintimille, married only in name. She was, indeed, the only woman whom he ever really loved. Although seeing her constantly

he was, when away from her, always writing to her; during the two years that the connection lasted he wrote her over two thousand letters.

We must, however, return to the days when Madame de Mailly first became favourite. France had then been at peace for practically twenty years, and there was a very warlike feeling throughout the country, the young nobles especially burning to emulate the deeds of their fathers in the days of the Grand Monarque.

There were two or three persons of distinction in the country who sought to instil this warlike feeling into the heart of the young King. At the head of these was the gallant old Maréchal de Villars, the hero of endless combats, the greatest of which, his brilliant victory at Denain in 1713, had brought Austria to her knees, and forced her to the Peace of Rastadt in the following year.

Villars was much beloved of the Queen, and when that old voluptuary Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, died in February, 1733, he boldly declared to Louis that the time had come for him to reinstate the Queen's father, Stanislas Lesczynski, upon the throne of Poland. Secretly he was aided in his counsels by Chauvelin and Madame de Mailly; but Fleury was all for peace at any price.

In his wishes for peace the Cardinal had two ideas—the first, rigid economy; the second, to do nothing calculated to hurt the interests of France's old enemy, Austria. This country was dear to the Jesuits on account of its persecution of the Protestants in Hungary, which was continued and bitterly cruel. The wishes of the Jesuits were accordingly to allow Austria to remain strong with a free hand, and they warned Fleury to let her alone.

Fleury, in 1733, however, found himself being carried off his legs by the current, headed by the young King and the nobles. To his disgust he found himself compelled to send a million of livres to Poland to assist the cause of the re-election of Stanislas, and, not much later, three more millions had to follow.

The Polish Assembly at Warsaw voted in May that they would have "none but a Polish King," thus excluding Augustus III., the son of the Saxon debauchee, who was the candidate of Russia. The Emperor Charles VI., however, addressed haughty letters to France from Vienna, making light of the Polish rights of election —he was on the side of Saxony and Russia. In spite of Fleury, angry replies were sent from France, who felt that her honour was at stake.

In France war was looked forward to, more than for any other reason, as a means of emancipation from the tutelage of Fleury. It was hoped that, with it, the young King, who was but as a baby in arms, would shake off the leading-strings, and display to the kingdom some of the energy of his great-grandfather; moreover that, while gaining liberty for himself, Louis would give liberty to the people. Already it was felt that Fleury was declining.

Among those nursing this hope was Voltaire. He dared not launch upon France, while Fleury was omnipotent, those famous *Lettres sur les Anglais* which had already been in the press at Rouen for two or three years awaiting a favourable moment for publication. In these Voltaire exhibited his admiration of the English and their polity. Above all, he described the operations of constitutional government in flattering terms, calculated to give a powerful impulse to the love of liberty

which, from the days of the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, had commenced to spread among the classes and the masses alike.

Among those whose counsels Fleury had to fear almost as much as those of Villars, was the able and brave Comte de Bellisle, or Belle-Isle, as his name is written by d'Argenson in his *Loisirs d'un ministre*. The Comte de Belle-Isle was the grandson of Fouquet, the Surintendant des Finances in the days of Cardinal Mazarin, who was disgraced when the Cardinal died, and imprisoned for life at the instances of his rival Colbert.

Fouquet's grandson was the son of the Marquis de Belle-Isle and a sister of the Duc de Lévis. Although bearing the title from the island of the same name off the French coast which was his possession, the Marquis was kept in disgrace by Louis XIV., who occupied his island with a garrison. Colbert had, indeed, too well aroused the Monarch's hatred against the family for any of Fouquet's descendants to have any chance of advancement before the death of Louis XIV.

With the Regency came a change. The young Belle-Isle, distinguished already, and dangerously wounded in the Flemish wars under the Maréchal de Boufflers, knew how to make himself useful to the Duc d'Orléans and his Minister, Cardinal Dubois. In the short war against Spain in 1719 he fulfilled the hazardous position of spy upon his chief, the Duke of Berwick, the commander of the French forces. This son of James II. and Arabella Churchill, sister of the Duke of Marlborough, was looked upon by the Regent with a certain amount of suspicion, he being half-brother to the Pretender, whose cause Spain was supporting. After this war Belle-Isle



From an engraving after a painting by de la Tour.

MARÉCHAL DE BELLE-ISLE.

was rewarded by being made Maréchal de Camp and Governor of Huninguen.

Towards the end of the Regent's career, and during the First-Ministry of M. le Duc, the Comte de Belle-Isle shared with his friend Leblanc, Minister of War, the hatred of Madame de Prie, from which cause both fell for a time, and were unjustly imprisoned in the Bastille. Belle-Isle was further exiled and persecuted so long as the reign of Madame de Prie lasted. For that lady never could forgive her mother's lovers for refusing to leave Madame Pléneuf to worship at her own feet.

When the Cardinal de Fleury took hold of the reins, and while, in their turn, his enemies the Duc de Bourbon and Madame de Prie were exiled, Belle-Isle, with his brother the Chevalier de Belle-Isle, reappeared at the Court. The Cardinal, in his young and giddy days, had carried on a love affair with the Duchesse de Lévis, Belle-Isle's aunt. The lady reminded the Cardinal of the happy past days, with the result that her nephew was reinstated in the War Office, with his old chief and friend Leblanc, who was once more made War Minister.

Leblanc dying, the Comte de Belle-Isle did not care to remain in the War Department under M. d'Angervilliers, his successor. He contrived to be appointed Lieutenant-General and Commandant of Metz and the Three Bishopries, and to gain considerable credit for the advantageous arrangements which he made for the State in his new command, especially for his splendid fortification of Metz.

This was the position which the Comte de Belle-Isle occupied when, at the beginning of 1733, he joined with the old Maréchal de Villars in urging the King to warlike measures, and, together, the King was not able to

withstand them. Towards the end of August all of the Council of State was carried away by their eloquence. Fleury alone was left murmuring. Even the semi-Jansenist, semi-devout young Duc d'Orléans, who hated war, agreed with the rest of the Council in saying that in the matter of Poland France had gone too far to draw back.

There is no doubt, despite the sneers of his enemies, that Belle-Isle was a great man. Although the Marquis d'Argenson joins occasionally in these sneers, it would seem rather as if his memoirs had been touched up by his son M. de Paulmy where they concern Belle-Isle. A reason for this can be found in the fact that, some years after the Marquis wrote, M. de Paulmy was replaced in the Ministry of War by the then old Maréchal de Belle-Isle, who also assumed some of the honours of which the Comte Marc-Pierre d'Argenson, Paulmy's uncle, had been bereft. Paulmy would, therefore, be only too ready to minimise such acts of personal bravery as Belle-Isle's capture of Trèves by a *coup de main* in 1733, or to cut out too complimentary mention of his gallant storming of Trarbach, and also of an outwork of Philipsburg, which he took by sheer audacity. But his father seems to speak with attempted impartiality, even if his words have been touched up :

" However it may be, there is every reason to suppose that the fortune of M. de Belle-Isle will not stay where it now is. Although up to the present he has, so to speak, done nothing but intrigue, people believe him capable of becoming a very great General, and even a great Minister. That is possible, but it must be agreed that up till now he has only been recompensed for presumed merits.

"He is tall and thin, his constitution seems delicate, his stomach weak, his chest attacked. Since the wound through the breast received at the siege of Lille, he seems compelled to take great care of his health; but from the second that he feels himself animated with the desire for glory, or to make an ambitious plan succeed, the activity of his soul makes him find the strength which the weakness of his body refuses. He works continually, never sleeps, tires out the hardest-working secretaries, dictating to several at the same time; in short, he is all on fire, devours everything and resists everything. He carries along several intrigues at once, and is careful that the several threads do not become intermixed. Nevertheless, the proof that his ideas are neither very luminous nor really great is that his style is weak, even flat, that he writes neither purely nor with strength, that he is not even eloquent when speaking. But he always seems assured of success, he speaks without hesitating, and he persuades all the better because one believes that he is not artificial. He understands even better to cause approval of what he has done than what he is going to do. When one has followed his advice, if things have turned out all right one feels under an obligation to him; should they have gone wrong one feels that it has been one's own fault. If M. de Belle-Isle should be charged with a great administration, it is to be feared that his love for details and projects of all kinds will induce him to take hold of more than he can handle. Also, he is sure to take a fancy to adventurers; being something of one himself, he will not be able to distinguish between those who will be really useful to him and the others.

"M. de Belle-Isle has made himself a custom of

concealing the immensity of his plans under a starchy air of wisdom. Nevertheless, the interior fire of his imagination is heated up by this constraint. You see a stiff and motionless statue calmly proposing to you the devastation of empires, the agitation of republics, and leading you, by reasoned consequences, to the most dangerous results for the State which should follow them according to his ideas. The great fault of his nature is that he does not know when to pull up, he only perceives perfection in the infinite.

"I once heard M. de Belle-Isle utter words which made me shudder. 'Nothing so easy,' said he one day before me, 'than to overset, by a simple line of the pen, the Russian power into the sea, and that without leaving one's office!'

"In truth, there is enough to make one tremble in seeing a frivolous and venturesome people like ours giving itself over into the hands of such leaders."

Such then is a portrait of the sole French General in whom Frederick the Great had ever any confidence; the man who would have brought glory to France had it not been for the crass idiotcy and obstinacy of the old woman Fleury, who seemed to take a positive delight, as long as he lived, in doing the exact opposite to any scheme proposed by Belle-Isle.

CHAPTER X

The War of the Polish Succession

1733—1737

WHEN Chauvelin discovered the strength of the party behind him, he ceased for the moment to fear Fleury, and acted promptly, taking, in conjunction with Spain and Savoy—that is, the kingdom of Sardinia and Piedmont—such measures as must necessarily lead to war.

Years afterwards, when in disgrace and exile, he disclosed his reasons for thus hurrying on the conflict. They were no weighty affairs of State which prompted Chauvelin to deluge Europe with blood, but simply that, with its *affaire Cadière* and other foolish disputes, France had become ridiculous and a laughing-stock. The Keeper of the Seals, therefore, considered that she required a war to re-establish herself as a serious nation in the eyes of the world. While, therefore, apparently merely following the general and national impulse, Chauvelin was in reality acting vigorously upon his own account when, upon September 26th, 1733, he signed what was known as the Treaty of Turin, between Spain, France, and Sardinia.

This treaty was one for the driving of Austria out of Italy. Its provisions were, roughly, that the Duchy of Milan should be conquered and given to the Pied-

montese Prince, who in return would give Savoy to France; France would then generously return Savoy, satisfied if Austria were driven from Italy. The elder Infante of Spain, Don Carlos, was to have the two Sicilies—that is, the kingdom of Naples and the island of Sicily—the younger, Don Philip, to have Tuscany, Parma, and Piacenza, and, in return for her assistance, Spain was to pay large subsidies to France. This latter proviso delighted and calmed Fleury. A large French army under the Duke of Berwick was to occupy Lorraine, and to cross the Rhine into Germany, and, at the same time, the army of Italy under the Maréchal Duc de Villars was to cross the Alps. In the harbour of Brest a fleet, under the violent old sea-dog Duguay-Trouin, was to be got ready for the North Sea and the Baltic.

To all these provisions Fleury appeared to agree, but it was with a concealed ill-will. Secretly, even before the war broke out, he was cooling down the martial ardour of the young King, who soon ceased to wish for a war or to care whether or no his father-in-law should become once more a King in Poland.

There was, however, no means of holding the country of France, which, like a greyhound on a leash, was straining for war. Fleury was, however, in league with Sir Robert Walpole, the peaceable Minister then directing affairs in England, and, between them, they agreed to do all that they could to prevent the beginning of a war, but, if begun, to neutralise its results and stultify the action of the French Generals, by working in favour of Austria. The Poles were to be betrayed and Austria saved in the moment of her imminent destruction. Such was the design of the traitor

Fleury, acting under the instructions of his religious director at Issy, which were the more peremptory on account of the recent military persecution by Austria of Salzburg.

England, also, which had been the ally of Austria in the last war against France, now seemed to love that land of bigoted and persecuting Catholics more than ever, and anxious to protect the country whence the hordes of semi-barbarians who mutilated prisoners were to be launched on Europe.

The diplomatist Horatio Walpole, brother of Sir Robert, was present in Paris, and appeared to be inseparable from Fleury. He brought all his dispatches from London to the old Cardinal, and paid him the compliment of asking his assistance in framing their replies. Thus English Protestantism and the Jesuits in France were in league together for Austria against France, the Cardinal—the ruler of France—being as much a traitor to his country as though he were fighting in the ranks of her opponents.

While both the Queen and the mistress urged the King on to the war, Fleury continued to block all preparations, and allowed the summer to pass by. Nothing was done to arm the fleet in Brest, nor were any measures taken for the provisioning of the armies, to move which swiftly was a vital measure if success were to be ensured. Thus the Saxon and the Austrian were enabled to arm at their leisure; the distant Russian had also time to quietly get ready for a promenade into Poland. Towards the end of August a despairing cry came from Poland. "King Stanislas must come at once, or all will be lost!"

While the Queen was on needles with anxiety and

Villars was thundering in rage, the assembled Council could do nothing because the King could not be found. For three days he remained missing—he was at Chantilly making love to the young wife of M. le Duc. At length he returned, and Stanislas was then able to tear himself from his anxious daughter's arms and start almost alone for his perilous journey across Europe, through hostile States. That night Louis XV., instead of staying at Versailles to console his wife, in an agony of fear for her father's safety, went off to sleep at la Muette, accompanied by his mistress.

In fifteen days Stanislas made the journey to Warsaw, where he was received tumultuously by the Poles. Sixty thousand nobles and gentlemen voted for him as their King. But, with exception of some excellent but scattered cavalry, there were no forces at hand wherewith to protect the King whom they had chosen, and the Russians were coming. Saxony had not, however, yet set any troops in motion, and merely ten thousand men sent from France would have been sufficient to secure the Queen's father in the possession of the crown which he had regained by the popular acclaim. But they did not come. Stanislas Lesczynski, who had counted upon at least that number of men from his daughter's kingdom, as a nucleus around which to raise an army, found himself deserted, for not a man came from France. Fleury saw to that. Forced to retire to Dantzic, he next expected the arrival of the fleet from Brest. For that too the deceived Prince waited in vain.

Walpole and Fleury had together played a comedy over that matter to deceive France. English warships were sent to cruise up and down in front of Brest,

which furnished Fleury with the false and feeble excuse, "We dare not leave—Horatio Walpole says that to do so would be an attack upon the commercial liberties which the treaties assure to the navigation of the Baltic."

Thus winter came, the Baltic was closed with ice, while the city of Dantzic did its best to defend itself and its newly elected King from the Russians who, to the number of thirty thousand, arrived before the place. The sole assistance which came to Dantzic was a letter, written by Louis XV. upon November 18th, 1733, encouraging the citizens of Dantzic to resist boldly and vigorously.

In the meantime, France had placed a hundred thousand men upon the Rhine. Villars and Belle-Isle loudly cried for permission to penetrate into Germany, to stir up Bavaria and other German Powers inimical to Austria. The Austrians by the greatest exertions had meanwhile only contrived to put seventy thousand in the field. Fleury, however, replied to his two brave generals, "Yes, yes; if we only had with us the States of the German Empire, we could go in."

"Go in; and the Empire will be with you," thundered Villars in reply.

At length, after the late autumn rains had come, the armies were allowed to cross the Rhine. They soon returned, the country having become impassable with water, while the Austrian forces marched off to Italy, whither Villars also proceeded.

The gallant old Maréchal Duc de Villars, although now over eighty years of age, was as full of courage and fire as ever. He had been invested with a rank which had only been hitherto bestowed upon his former comrade, the Maréchal Vicomte de Turenne. This was

that of Maréchal-Général of the camps and armies of France. He strove, and not in vain, to prove himself in his old age as worthy of this rank as Turenne had been before him. In Italy he rapidly conquered the Duchies of Milan and Mantua, but he soon had cause to be dissatisfied with the conduct of the King of Sardinia, in whose interests France was fighting, since, according to the bargain made, Milan was to be annexed to the possessions of that Piedmontese Prince whose seat of government was Turin.

The Savoyard King, Charles Emanuel, however, refused to listen when Villars endeavoured to drive into his head the fact that he should assist with all his might in crushing Austria before she could get together a big army; replying that Milan was all he wanted—with that he was satisfied.

In February, 1734, the Spanish army arrived, under Don Carlos. Now, at all events, Villars hoped for assistance in crushing the Austrians. Again he was doomed to disappointment; Don Carlos marched away to the south to the easy conquest of Naples, leaving Villars with the French army to face the storm gathering against him in the Tyrol.

Naples opened its gates to the Infante on May 30th, 1734, when he received homage in the name of his father, Philip V., from all orders of the State. The King his father, transferred his rights to Don Carlos, who thus became the first Bourbon King of the two Sicilies.

The French infantry, by performing prodigies of valour, held the Austrians in the north, but Villars died of disgust and despair at Turin on June 17th. He was succeeded in the command by two old Generals,

the Maréchal Duc de Coigny and the Maréchal Comte de Broglie, then called Broglio. This latter, owing to the intentional delays of the Savoyard, was almost captured on the Secchia. He escaped in his shirt, with his breeches in his hand! In two furious battles, however, at Parma and Guastalla, the young French soldiery with the greatest steadiness beat off the terrible onslaughts of the wild Hungarian and Croatian cavalry, charging like demons with their red cloaks flying in the breeze. In the former,, June 29th, 1734, the able Austrian General Count Mercy was killed, while in the latter, September 19th, 1734, Broglio defeated Count Königsegg and drove him across the Po. The Sardinians fought valiantly with Broglio in this action.

These battles saved the Spaniards in the south, the scanty garrisons of Germanic race yielded up most of the towns almost without a blow to Don Carlos, and such of their remnants as, banded together, attempted to make a stand against the Spaniards, were defeated by the Duke of Mortemart at Bitonto.

The cowardice or treachery of Fleury's government had in the meantime become more than ever apparent in the matter of Poland, which country was by this time occupied by a hundred thousand Russians and Saxons. It was now no longer a question of retaining the monarchy for Stanislas; all that could be hoped for was to save the life of that Prince, still shut up in Dantzic.

Some French ships arrived at length, in May, before that place, but refused to disembark the few troops on board. There was at Copenhagen in the position of French Ambassador a gallant man, the Comte de Plélo. In his indignation, when the French fleet arrived at Copenhagen, Plélo taunted the commanders of the little

force on board with their cowardice. He offered to lead them himself against the Russians, and obtained some fifteen or sixteen hundred volunteers under Peyrouse-Lamotte. With this small force Plélo landed below the fort of Wechselmunde and charged the thirty thousand Russians in front of Dantzic.

Such was the gallantry with which this brave man inspired his few followers, that Plélo had almost succeeded in cutting his way through the Russians into Dantzic when he fell mortally wounded. M. de la Peyrouse-Lamotte then gallantly managed to extricate his small force from the thousands of Russians surrounding them, and for a month entrenched himself near at hand, supporting the brave defenders of Dantzic.

On June 23rd the small French band was forced to yield to General Munich, the Austrian General assisting the Russians, when this General chivalrously allowed Peyrouse-Lamotte to re-embark with his remaining men and stores, owing to his admiration of the courage displayed by the French.

Dantzic fell on July 7th, 1734, but King Stanislas Lesczynski escaped in disguise and found a refuge with Frederick William I., who was the second King of Prussia and the brutal father of Frederick the Great. Although a partisan war continued to be carried on in Poland for some little time longer, the Austrians and Russians were omnipotent. The Pope absolved the Polish nobility and gentry from the oath they had sworn never to have a foreign King, and Augustus III., the Saxon, the tool of Russia, became their ruler.

Meanwhile, in Germany the Duke of Berwick had taken the fortress of Kehl in December, 1733, had forced the lines of the Austrians at Erlingen in the early part

of 1734, and had then proceeded to invest Philipsburg in form. In front of this city he was killed by a cannon-ball while making a reconnaissance. "Just like his usual luck!" exclaimed old Villars when he heard of this occurrence, which was shortly before his own death in his bed at Turin. This occurrence took place in the very room in which he was born. Philipsburg, in the Grand Duchy of Baden, on the right bank of the Rhine, fell not long after to the Duc de Noailles, who was made a Maréchal de France when Berwick died. During the continuance of the siege of that place the old Prince Eugène was close at hand with an army, but his ardour was gone and he did not approve of the war. Accordingly, he stood by without making any effort to save the town, which was only taken after great difficulties, owing to heavy rains, on July 18th, 1734.

In the following year, the senile Duc de Noailles and his lieutenant the Maréchal d'Asfeldt failing to agree, nothing was done to profit by the advantages which had been gained in Germany. After the battles of Parma and Guastalla the fortunes of Austria seemed, however, to be at a low ebb. In the former their commander-in-chief, M. de Mercy, had been killed, while in the latter the Prince of Wurtemberg likewise met his fate. The Spaniards had occupied Sicily as well as the kingdom of Naples, while the Austrians, falling back on the Tyrol, merely held Mantua. The Duc de Noailles was about to invest Mantua, and thus complete the conquest of Italy, when, owing to the quarrels between the King of Sardinia and the Queen of Spain as to which of them should keep the place when taken, Charles Emanuel withdrew his troops in dudgeon.

Noailles now remained inactive, and in the meantime Fleury, inspired by England and his Jesuits, suddenly commenced overtures of peace with Austria, greatly to the advantage of that country. Entirely renouncing those ideas of the total emancipation of Italy from the Austrian rule with which France had entered upon the war, Fleury in 1735 proposed to return the Duchy of Milan, while France was also to renounce all her conquests in Germany. At the same time the Cardinal guaranteed to the Emperor Charles VI. that pragmatic sanction which his soul so greatly desired.

The two Sicilies were left to Don Carlos, who was to become their King; but he was compelled to renounce his claim to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, also Parma and Piacenza, which he had obtained in 1731. These three States were formed into an appanage for Duke Francis of Lorraine, the betrothed of Maria Theresa of Austria. All that the King of Sardinia gained by the war was Tortona and Novara, two cantons of Milan. For Stanislas Lesczynski, the father of the French Queen, in his anxiety to advantage Austria, Fleury had but little care. Modestly the Cardinal expressed himself as willing to accept for the King of Poland merely the little Duchy of Bar, and, in addition, the return of his personal estates in Poland. It is true that to these was added a facetious proviso emanating from Walpole. This was that an embassy should be solemnly sent to the King of Poland to thank him for giving up his dominions.

The negotiations of this inglorious peace were, in spite of Fleury, who wished to finish off at once, considerably protracted. The Keeper of the Seals, Chauvelin, was determined that terms so ignoble for France should not be accepted. He dared to browbeat the Cardinal,

and insist that in return for the three Italian Duchies given to the Duke Francis of Lorraine that Prince should resign Lorraine. This country was, according to the views of Chauvelin, to be given as well as Bar to Stanislas for life; after his death to revert to the Crown of France. Moreover, Stanislas was to retain the title of King of Poland, while relinquishing the throne of that country. In the end Chauvelin gained his point, and with it the glorious possession of Lorraine for France, which she retained until the war with Prussia in 1870, when she lost both Lorraine and Alsace.

While gaining for France the only honourable terms in the treaty of peace, Chauvelin ruined himself. His principal crime in the eyes of the Cardinal was a postscript which, in 1737, he added in his own handwriting to a letter written by Fleury to the Emperor: "That in the meantime the King would continue to hold Philipsburg, Trèves, and Kehl." These were the words added by Chauvelin, and they were tantamount to saying that if the Emperor would never finish the negotiations France would continue to remain in Germany.

These bold words decided everything. Austria yielded, Stanislas obtained the Duchy of Lorraine, where he established his Court at Lunéville; but the fall of Chauvelin was assured. It had long been decided upon between Walpole and Cardinal Fleury—he was too good a Frenchman for those good Austrians. He was offered money to go, but he refused. His enemies then descended to calumny, and accused him of stealing—a watch among other things! Walpole then procured letters in which the Keeper of the Seals had communicated with Spain. He had done so purely in the interests of France, but it was made the excuse,

by the traitor Fleury, to accuse Chauvelin of treason to his country.

Conquered and terrified by the firmness of Chauvelin, Austria delivered over Lorraine upon February 15th, 1737. A week later, on February 23rd, Cardinal Fleury, in revenge, exiled Chauvelin—an exile which lasted for the rest of his life. Although frequently appealed to, never, in the moments of the greatest difficulties of France, would the ungrateful Louis XV. consent to his return to Versailles.

CHAPTER XI

Mademoiselle de Nesle

1738—1741

THE life of the devoted Madame de Mailly was not a very happy one between the years 1737 and 1741. Fluttering around the Queen were the intriguing Madame de Tencin with her unscrupulous brother the Archbishop of Embrun (who became at last a Cardinal, in March, 1739), the Duc and the ladies of the Noailles family, and, above all, the most important of the Noailles, Madame de Toulouse.

During the King's illness in 1738 the Tencins had arranged everything in such a manner that upon them would have devolved the supreme authority, in a Council of Regency under the Queen, had Louis died. The King, however, recovered, when Madame de Toulouse became more than ever *empressée* in her semi-motherly, semi-loverly attentions to the young Monarch. She, who set up for being devout, was working at the same time in the interests of her son the Duc de Penthièvre, and the interests of the Church.

The Condés demanded that this young son, upon the death of his father the Comte de Toulouse, should not continue in his person the Royal condition which the Regent had continued to his father, who was one

of the legitimatised children of Louis XIV. by Madame de Montespan.

Madame de Toulouse, according to the Duc de Luynes, gave little suppers to the King which astonished the Court, who knew to what an extent Louis was apt to forget himself after drinking. When her husband died, all inundated with tears, the Comtesse threw herself into the arms of the King, confiding to his care her fortunes and those of her son. The King was greatly touched; he consoled her, and thenceforward his visits to her pleasant retreat at Rambouillet became more frequent than ever. Thus she gradually advanced more and more in his good graces.

Not content with receiving the King at Rambouillet, Madame de Toulouse, who had in her widowhood retained a fine set of apartments at Versailles, kept him there constantly by her side. There was a little secret staircase by which M. de Toulouse had formerly been able to visit at will his father Louis XIV.—he had possesed a private key. The King was now in the habit of running up and down this staircase at any hour, but Madame de Toulouse did not possess the key, and was anxious to obtain that favour. She at length, however, succeeded in gaining it by a ruse.

Louis XV. was fond of wood-carving and turning; the Comtesse brought him a piece of some precious wood which she had received from her late husband, and proposed that he should turn and carve it for her into a pretty key-holder, upon the model of the key of his apartments. When it was finished, it was a pity that the case should remain empty! Louis returned it, with the precious key inside, to the Comtesse upon March 17th, 1738. It was, moreover, the master-

key which opened all the doors, even that leading to the King's last cabinet, where he wrote. The intimacy so granted to Madame de Toulouse was greater than any which the King ever accorded to his daughter Madame Henriette, although later he gave it to his beloved daughter Madame Adélaïde. It was in truth a very great favour, since by it Madame de Toulouse was able to go in and out whenever she chose, and read at will all the papers lying upon the King's table.

In the meantime the Comtesse kept up a great appearance of affliction for the loss of her husband, and, with many devotional exercises, imposed upon the inhabitants of the Château of Versailles. Thus people thought more than they dared to say openly of such a pious lady. Madame de Mailly was, however, very unhappy, and frequently tired the King with scenes of jealousy on account of her good-looking, plump, and elderly rival.

Madame de Toulouse, on the other hand, put forward the excuse that she was really in need of the King's protection for her young son. In such a cause, what might seem doubtful was really but the performance of a motherly duty. She proved eminently successful in the accomplishment of her designs. Between May and November, 1738, she contrived to win back for the young Duc de Penthièvre all the Royal honours, and to recover all the princely appanages of his rank. At a supper at Fontainebleau this young son, now named as a Prince of the Blood, waited upon the King at table, while the Comtesse herself waited upon him at dessert, handing to Louis a glass and a plate. By these actions, a relic of feudal customs, the Royalty of both mother and son was undeniably established.

After this the Comtesse was less careful to keep up appearances; in August she established a bedroom for the King at Rambouillet, also, says the Duc de Luynes, a private cabinet, concerning which she held a long conversation with the King in the presence of the courtiers at Versailles. The conversation, although carried on in low tones, was not so low but that all knew what it was about. (Luynes, ii. 226: August 21st, 1738.)

This state of affairs naturally saddened Madame de Mailly. Feeling herself neglected and alone, she listened all the more readily when her intriguing sister Mademoiselle de Nesle wrote her the "letters upon letters" begging her to take her from her convent. Upon her arrival at the Court, full of life and gaiety, she soon filled the tedious Versailles with her youthful spirits and clever sayings. These were bold and biting, and spared no one, not even the King, whom she captivated by laughing at and making fun of him.

It was not long, indeed, after the arrival of Mademoiselle de Nesle at Versailles, before every one in the dull surroundings of the Court, fearing her ridicule, was afraid of her. The situation had indeed been flat and uninteresting to a degree, dominated as it was by an old Minister who seemed in his dotage, and a mistress whose charms no longer attracted. Moreover, people were bored to death with the unhealthy and tiresome story of Madame de Toulouse with her secret staircase; the pious manœuvres of that lady, twenty-two years the King's senior, filled the wearied courtiers with disgust. Thus Versailles was worn out and sick of everything, when, after the peace negotiations had been at length completed, and Chauvelin, the one person

of energy, sent away, Pauline Félicité brought a breath of novelty and liveliness to the used-up sourroundings of the King and Queen.

In the following year the King gave evidence of being conscience-stricken. Brought up as he had been in the fear of the terrors of hell, he imagined that, living a life which was considered incestuous with the two sisters, he could no longer take the Sacrament at Easter. The fear of some terrible judgment falling upon him, if he should desecrate the Sacrament, determined Louis to take a step which was a great blow to the clergy. The Church was crushed when the King declared "*qu'il ne ferait point ses pâques.*"

The eldest son of the Church—not to communicate at Easter! There was the greatest scandal and commotion throughout Paris when this became known. Many, no doubt, shared the views of Barbier, that the King could do no wrong. That writer demands "how is it that the Church has not a dispensation from the Pope to administer the Sacrament to Louis, no matter what might be the conditions of his life?"

The ultramontane party, knocked down by the blow, tried to deceive the public by a ruse. Cardinal Fleury endeavoured to persuade his pupil to allow a Low Mass to be celebrated in the Royal cabinet, so that the world might imagine he had communicated as usual. Louis, however, would have none of these subterfuges—he refused to allow the not very creditable farce proposed by the clergy to be played.

Meanwhile the curious spectacle was to be seen in France of the hopes of the people being fixed upon a woman to save the Royalty, elevate the King, lift up the kingdom. It did not matter whom the woman

might be—any woman would serve the turn. The same hope was to be seen springing to the surface every time that the King took a new mistress. Even the best of men like the Marquis d'Argenson embraced it. It mattered not whether the woman were Madame de Mailly, Madame de Vintimille, Madame de la Tournelle, or Madame de Pompadour, it was ever the same. With the appearance of each upon the scene in turn there sprang up in the breast of the people of France the ardent desire that she might do something with the King—make a man of Louis. Even the biting and ironical Voltaire went with the rest in this matter. In spite of his ironies and sarcasms, Voltaire persisted in imagining vainly that each new petticoat might contain an Agnès Sorel, to stir up to manhood and glory another Charles VII.

It must be confessed that with the appearance upon the scene of Mademoiselle de Nesle there seemed some considerable prospect that the necessary miracle might be accomplished. The essential thing was that the King loved her and admired her genius. Although her power was exerted in secret, and, so to speak, under the shadow of her sister's wing, it was none the less real, at the same time that it was exercised with prudence. Prudence was indeed necessary for one who, actively anti-Austrian in her sentiments, was combating the ever-present inert weight of the Austrian Fleury, with his Austrian Walpole and Austrian Jesuits at Issy behind him.

During her short lifetime, under her sister's cloak, Pauline Félicité de Nesle thus contrived to a great extent to prevent her actual position from being recognised. France at large scarcely knew her name at the

very moment when she was preparing to launch upon Austria and Europe an entire revolution of policy. All, however, about the Court who knew her, friend and foe alike, recognised that, with a keen and brilliant mode of expressing herself, she possessed a vast and powerful mind, one which would have shrunk before nothing.

The young King Frederick II. of Prussia, afterwards known as Frederick the Great, ascended the throne at the age of twenty-eight at the end of May, 1740. As may be seen from his own Memoirs, none better than he understood the position of affairs at Versailles before he ventured suddenly to attack Austria. He well knew that the Nesle interest was dead against Austria, or he would never have dared to strike as boldly as he did. Everything, however, hung upon a young woman, and upon the strength of the King's love for her. How far was he prepared to go, tied to her frills and furbelows? How far would he be bold enough to resist the influences of his childhood, as represented by the senile and old-womanly Fleury? Would Louis ever be capable of rising from the mud in which he grovelled upon the wings of a great love? These were the questions to be considered, and their answer was doubtful in the extreme.

Voltaire, however, was inclined to answer the last in the affirmative. For several years past he had taken refuge at Cirey, near Vassy, in Champagne, with Madame du Châtelet, the handsome young lady of literary and philosophical inclinations who worshipped him. Her husband, according to the strange customs of those days, approved of the liaison. To the Marquis du Châtelet his wife was so but in name; for fifteen years she was practically the wife of Voltaire, after which

she proved unfaithful to her distinguished lover. Being present with the Marquis du Châtelet and Voltaire at the Court of King Stanislas at Lunéville, she gave birth to a little girl, of which the poet Saint-Lambert was the father. She was then forty-two, and died a few days later. Her life had paid the forfeit of her too late excursions into fresh courts of love.

Already in 1739, while the then Prince of Prussia, himself a writer and adorer of *les belles-lettres*, was calling Voltaire to him, Madame du Châtelet persuaded the poet to return to Paris, which was, she felt, the real theatre for his genius. In April of that year she and Voltaire together purchased the magnificent hôtel belonging to the Dupins, son-in-law and daughter of the wealthy Samuel Bernard. It was known as the Hôtel Lambert, and situated upon the point of the island. To this spot they proposed to return, and openly. Voltaire, who had been an outcast, and was now forty-four years old, no longer proposed to make even a pretence of concealment, so convinced was he of the change that was being operated in the nature of the King, whose religious devotion had in a marked manner been displayed in antipathy to the free-thinking ideas of the author of the *Lettres sur les Anglais* and the *Henriade*.

Vainly did Voltaire think that now he was to obtain rest and repose, to be allowed to pass the rest of his life in the Hôtel Lambert, for a career of continued exile was, had he but known it, that which was really looming ahead of him.

While Voltaire was writing *Mahomet*, dedicated, strange to say, by permission, to the Pope, *Alzire*, his *Mémoire sur le feu*, and the disgusting *La Pucelle*, while also early in 1740 he visited the Prince of Prussia at

Berlin, the religious scruples of Louis XV. returned stronger than ever.

Being frightened by the rough language of the Bishop of Chartres, who threatened him with the plague, the King was seized with a fainting-fit while present at the Mass: he was not at all inclined to relent in his feelings towards the philosophical freethinker or others of his kidney.

Nevertheless Bachelier, his *valet de chambre*, at this time preached tolerance to his master, with the result that Louis ordered the slackening of the religious persecution of the Jansenists who refused to accept the Bull. They were now, at all events, allowed to die in peace, without having their last moments disturbed by the ultramontane priests who forced them to subscribe to its tenets with their last breath.

With this relief to the Jansenists it almost seemed as if the downfall of Fleury were about to take place. That very libertine Princesse of the Blood, Mademoiselle de Charolais, had openly taken Madame de Vintimille under her protection, taking her to stay in her apartments at Compiègne, where the King came to visit his beloved. Between them these ladies persuaded the King to play an unexpected trick upon the Cardinal, who was in the habit of coming to Compiègne to work with the King, during the presence there of a large camp under the command of the Duc de Biron.

Having his own key to the Royal apartments, Fleury was wont to open the door and walk in without being announced. Arriving one day, with Barjac, his valet, carrying his portfolio, in vain did both master and servant endeavour to open the door. Louis, inside, listened and laughed as he heard first the fumblings and

then the scratchings at the door which in those days took the place of knocking. At length the King opened, and, to the Cardinal's expostulations, merely remarked frigidly, "I have had the locks changed."

In spite of this childish affront to the Cardinal, the natural maliciousness of the King's nature made him take an equal delight in seeing Fleury at times humiliate not only Madame de Mailly but Madame de Vintimille, whom he professed and appeared to love so deeply.

Blow after blow was struck by Fleury at the friends of the sisters. Chauvelin was exiled, M. de Mailly was exiled, M. de Nesle, the father of the two mistresses, was also exiled from Versailles to Lisieux. It amused the petty mind of the King to see the two sisters compelled to go humbly to the old Cardinal and beg from him their father's pardon. The Cardinal, at their request, changed the place of exile from Lisieux to Caen.

Even in the matter of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Nesle, Louis played her false. Having determined to provide her with a husband, in order that any offspring that she might bear should be covered with his name, he had promised to the young lady that that husband should be a Prince—the Comte d'Eu, a son of the Duc du Maine. Instead of which he provided her with a little protégé of Fleury's, Vintimille, a noble of no consequence.

She, like her sister de Mailly, now became sad, feeling herself humiliated by Fleury. Others, too, seeing this, thought that the star of "la" Nesle was setting, and commenced to avoid her, after the fashion of Courts under such circumstances. She lived, thenceforth, very much alone in her chamber, to which her husband never ventured to penetrate.

The ladies about the Queen, notably the spiteful woman connected with the Queen's intimates, the de Luynes, Madame du Deffand, formerly the hanger-on and go-between of Madame de Prie, became curious to penetrate to this apartment and find out what she did there. Du Deffand was now living in the household of the Duchesse du Maine, from whose imitation of a Court at Sceaux she wished to emancipate herself to form an establishment of her own. This she thought she could accomplish either through Madame de Vintimille or through the enemies of that lady. She commenced by flattery and caresses. In the sincerity of these Pauline Félicité pretended to believe, answering the gushing letter, in which du Deffand represented herself as the friend of Voltaire, by one equally expansive. With a charming *abandon* and appearance of credulity, Madame de Vintimille declared to Madame du Deffand that nothing in the world would give her so much pleasure as to be directed in all matters by her.

But "la" Nesle took care that matters should go no farther, and, as she remained alone to plot and plan, her star soon seemed to reascend. In the beginning of 1740 it was very high. To her alone of all the ladies or Princesses of the Court did the King give a New Year's gift upon January 1st; while in February she had a victory over Fleury. In that month she appointed the new Minister of War, M. de Breteuil, in the very face of the Cardinal's wishes. He replaced d'Angervilliers, who died.

The spiteful, bitter-tongued, and witty Comte Phelipeaux de Maurepas, who had hitherto maintained his post of Secretary of State since the age of fifteen by successful trimming, veered round to the side of the

rising star. He quietly deserted the Cardinal, while speaking well of Madame de Vintimille.

This, then, was the state of affairs at the Court of Versailles when two events of great importance occurred in Europe almost simultaneously. In the month of May, 1740, by his father's death, Frederick the Great, henceforth to be the hero of the hour, sprung upon the scene. Four months or so later Charles VI., Emperor of Germany, Archduke of Austria, and King or Duke of half a dozen other countries, breathed his last. Thus Europe was now face to face with the new and serious situation created by the Pragmatic Sanction, which Charles had instituted in favour of his daughter Maria Theresa, and by which, in defiance of the Salic law, she was to inherit all his possessions.

How now would all those countries act who, after the War of the Polish Succession, had subscribed to that Pragmatic Sanction? It was a moment of the greatest gravity for France above all other countries, yet was she perhaps the weakest in all Europe, owing to the fact that her fortunes still continued to be held in the hands of a doddering old priest, at this time eighty-seven years old. Against his weight and influence the Jesuits saw in Madame de Vintimille alone at Versailles an adversary of any weight to the cause of Austria, that ancient enemy of France. For the party of the religious Queen and her daughters and that of the Noailles, brother and sister, formed but one in favour of Austria, while the Comte de Stainville from Lorraine, later Duc de Choiseul, was but an Austrian spy.

In this year 1740 the Cardinal was rendered stronger than ever, owing to the withdrawal by death of the rival whose return to favour he ever feared. M. le Duc

died early that year, at the age of forty-seven, from a chill caught while rabbit shooting when too lightly dressed. Not long before his death, although himself continuing to live with the Comtesse d'Egmont, he had displayed the greatest jealousy of his wife. A serving-woman having informed him that the Duchesse de Bourbon was carrying on a love affair with M. de Bissy, M. le Duc had ordered her to be confined in barred apartments at the top of the house. As a matter of fact, the affair had not gone any further than the interchange of a letter or two, but the head of the Condé family had one law for himself and another for his wife, except where the King was concerned. For he had been compelled to rage in vain at His Majesty's attentions, which were fostered by his mother, the wicked Madame la Duchesse. From the time that she was known as Mademoiselle de Nantes, this licentious daughter of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan had never shrunk from any iniquity.

When he died, the King gave to his three-year-old son, the Prince de Condé, the charge of Grand-Master and also the government of Burgundy. The furious Comte de Charolais, a man of the most unbridled and violent passions, was appointed to exercise these functions, however, for his little nephew, until he should attain the age of eighteen.

In the autumn before M. le Duc died, he succeeded in procuring from the King the legitimation of his natural daughter by the Marquise de Nesle. This young lady, half-sister to Madame de Mailly and Madame de Vintimille, was called Henriette, Mademoiselle de Verneuil, and she married the Comte de la Guiche eight months after the Duc de Bourbon died.

The public saw in this act of legitimation the foreshadowment of a similar act in favour of a child whom Madame de Mailly was expected to bring into the world. Already people were saying, "It will be a Duc de Vendôme, like the son of Henri IV. by Gabrielle d'Estrées," when an accident ruined the hopes of Madame de Mailly. Her sister, however, became enceinte in the beginning of 1741, at the very time that the question of peace or war with Austria was once more the question of the day. The circumstance becoming known at once, the credit of Fleury commenced to go down, while that of the war party, headed by the Comte de Belle-Isle, was once more in the ascendant.

Madame de Vintimille being in favour of the party which was for alliance with the Protestant King of Prussia, she became more than ever hateful to the Church which favoured Catholic Austria. Her child was, to the great delight of the King, born at Versailles on September 4th, 1741. It was a son and a healthy infant, who lived to old age. The mother, however, already very ill, succumbed to a dose of poison, by whom actually administered being unknown, on September 9th. Moreover, her confessor, whom the dying girl had entrusted with a message for Madame de Mailly, never reached that lady's apartments alive. He tottered and fell dead at the threshold. The agony of mind of the King was pitiable, but he consoled himself with Madame de Mailly and the Comtesse de Toulouse.

CHAPTER XII

The House of Orléans

1740—1741

WHEN Madame de Vintimille died, according to an absurd custom which did not allow death to exist in the presence of Royalty, her body was hustled out of Versailles at once to a neighbouring hotel, and, having been examined with a view to finding poison, was carelessly left lying uncovered in a coach-house. Here the brutal populace of Versailles treated the remains to all sorts of indignities, such as firing crackers upon the body. The reason of the enmity shown to her whom they called *la reine de Choisy* was that the *canaille* imagined the dead woman to have been the cause of the King's prolonged absences from Versailles at Choisy.

This was a little country house which had been purchased for the King by Fleury in November, 1738, nominally as a hunting-box. However, M. le Duc's sister, the shameless Mademoiselle de Charolais, who had instituted herself as a sort of purveyor of the King's pleasures, soon gave a different character to the house at Choisy. Here the rule was enforced that ladies alone were received without their husbands. There were six bedrooms usually occupied by women of the Court, who came on the King's invitation for a day or two.

It was in order that she might hold the fort against all comers that Madame de Vintimille established herself at Choisy during the months before her confinement. Here she rendered herself extremely unpopular among the useless servantry, by pointing out to Louis how they were robbing him in the most barefaced manner, especially by their large thefts of bottles of Champagne.

Thus, not content with endeavouring to reform Europe, she tried also to reform the King's household, and to save him money, with which he was but poorly supplied by Fleury. Afraid of no one, she was foolish enough to attack even Bachelier, saying of the powerful *valet de chambre* to the King, "I suppose that you will go and *report* this to Bachelier?" She pointed out to him also how Barjac, Fleury's domestic, trafficked in the greatest places in the kingdom; how again the Abbé Brissard, the preceptor of Fleury's nephews, sold offices, and had made more than a million out of his illegal traffic. When this Brissard died, eighteen hundred thousand francs were found under the carpets in his bedroom; but in the meantime he is supposed to have served as the agent for all those who desired the death of the favourite, and to have poisoned both her and her unfortunate confessor.

Unfortunately, she was seen to be somewhat neglected by the King during the last months of her pregnancy, especially after the King had realised, from hearing the opinion of others, that she was ugly. They therefore arranged their plans serenely, and waited for the moment of her confinement to execute them without fear of punishment. The manner in which the King learned what was thought of the personal appearance of his mistress was as follows

Louis was one day walking upon a terrace at Versailles, when, from a chimney which opened close at hand, from a room below, he heard the voices of the Marquis de Flavacourt, husband of the handsome Hortense Félicité de Nesle, and M. de Vintimille. Approaching his ear to the wide chimney, the King found that they were discussing him and his mistresses, the sisters-in-law and wife of the persons talking below. They talked of the advancing age of Madame de Mailly, and of the imperious nature of Madame de Vintimille, that lady's husband expressly dwelling upon the ugliness of both, and the King's bad taste. Flavacourt, married to the beauty of the family, agreed, saying, "Yes, it's quite true, he has only got the two ugly ones," when the King lost his temper and shouted down the chimney, "Vintimille and Flavacourt! Will you hold your tongues? Do you understand what I say?" Although the courtiers were alarmed at the angry tones of the master, it seems more than probable that they knew all the time that they could be overheard, and were only rehearsing a little comedy which was arranged for the King's especial benefit.

At all events, the King was oftener at Rambouillet than at Choisy for some time after the conversation, although at the time of Madame de Vintimille's accouchement he showed the greatest anxiety, and personally and triumphantly conducted her to Versailles—and her death. A day or two previously he had, however, shown a great mark of favour to the Comtesse de Toulouse in presenting to her the château and estate of Luciennes, which had been occupied by Mademoiselle de Clermont—sister of M. le Duc—that lady having died recently.

Never, both in the Court of France and the Courts of various other States of Europe, was there such a mass of intrigue as during the months which succeeded the death of the Emperor in October, 1740, and preceded that of Madame de Vintimille in September, 1741. The juvenile Dauphin having been married to Marie Thérèse, a young Infanta of Spain, and the eldest daughter of Louis XV., a child of fifteen, united to the Infante Don Philip, the bonds between the two Bourbon-ruled countries had been drawn closer together, and with them strengthened the ambitions of Elizabeth Farnese, the Spanish Queen. Don Carlos, the elder of the two sons of this second wife of Philip V., being now provided for with the kingdom of the two Sicilies, she was more furiously determined than ever to establish Don Philip in another Italian kingdom at the expense of Austria. Tuscany, or at all events Milan, she was determined to have at any price, but Duke Francis of Lorraine was not inclined to give up the former, while to attempt to take Milan from Austria for a Spanish Prince married to a French Princesse would be to embroil France, with Spain, in a quarrel with Sardinia, who, since the Polish war, was still determined to possess Milan.

While, owing to the closely knit family relations, the King, Queen, Dauphin, and Royal Family in France were anxious to help in this matter of Milan for the Infante Don Philip, they were otherwise not at all unfavourable to Austria. Led by Fleury and the priesthood, they were indeed favourably inclined towards the youthful Queen of Hungary, Maria Theresa, and consequently disposed to support the Pragmatic Sanction which gave her Hungary, Bohemia, Austria, the Low Countries,

and other possessions. The Royal Family, however, was not France, which was opposed to both the Royal Family and Fleury. Especially was France, including the King, who was worked upon by the Comte de Belle-Isle and the two mistresses, averse to the project of of the ambitious young Maria Theresa for making her husband, Francis of Lorraine, Emperor of Germany in place of her deceased father Charles VI. Louis XV. had, by descent through his Spanish ancestresses, himself some claims to this grand position, held for so long in the male line of the Hapsburgs, but these he was inclined to waive, provided that he could supply Germany with an Emperor of his own choice, and the choice of France was the Bavarian Elector, Charles Albert.

To place him upon the Imperial throne, with the title of Charles VII., all the influence of France was accordingly exerted, and the Comte de Belle-Isle was in December, 1740, appointed to a splendid embassy to the Diet of Frankfort for the election of the Emperor. This step alone seemed to make war with Austria probable. There were, however, other causes of disturbance, owing to the quarrels of Spain with England, the friend of Austria, into which France seemed likely to be drawn, and owing also to the clamours of the Queen of Spain to be allowed to march her troops through France into Italy. With reference to this demand, both England and Holland declared that if the permission were granted it would be considered as a declaration of war. The weak old Cardinal was in despair; he found himself driven into a corner of the wall, and could see no means of escape.

In the meantime Madame de Mailly, and especially Madame de Vintimille, had formed a compact of mutual

assistance with the party of the Noailles family. This included the Duchesses de Villars and d'Armagnac among its members, and had great weight with all the female members of the Royal Family. The Duc de Noailles was anxious to become President of the Council of State, to obtain which brilliant position the Duc sent his son the Duc d'Ayen to make a pretence of being violently in love with Madame de Vintimille. That lady was not deceived, but laughed ; however, the two Nesle ladies promised to exert their influence with the King to obtain for the father the leadership of the Council.

While political intrigues, including the warm advances made to France by the young King of Prussia, were occupying all Europe, less weighty affairs seemed to form the principal subject of consideration at Versailles. Of these the most important appeared to be the King's revived interest in the womanly occupation, learned from the Duc de Gesvres, of making tapestry ; the next to be considered was the Cardinal's determination to thwart the house of Orléans and prevent the marriage of the young Duc de Chartres, son of the Duc d'Orléans, with his cousin Madame Henriette, the eldest unmarried daughter of the King. She was now about fifteen, and loved her cousin, who also loved her, and she had been promised to him by Louis.

Early in the year 1741 the Court of Versailles, following the King's example, went wild with the craze of tapestry making. To such an extent was this indulged in that it led to a quarrel, as between two children, between Louis and Madame de Mailly. The King and that lady were both occupied in this delightful occupation when the favourite became so engrossed in her employment that she failed to reply upon being ad-

dressed several times. So angry did Louis then become that he sprang up in a rage and with a pocket-knife cut Madame de Mailly's embroidery into four pieces. A terrible quarrel ensued; the rest of those present had to interfere to separate the disputants. The old Latin proverb, "Amantium iræ amoris integratio est," however, once more held good. The lovers became reconciled; with the result that that night the King proceeded to Paris, to be entertained to supper by Madame de Mailly. In addition to the usual silver flambeaux, she upon this occasion also borrowed a cook and gave a delightful entertainment to a small party of five or six *convives*.

All through the autumn and winter of 1740-41 there was the greatest distress throughout the country, the people wanting bread. While the Duc d'Orléans, devout and occupied with the affairs of eternity to an extent that he usually neglected those of this world, sympathised with the sufferers, Fleury could not be brought to pay attention to his suggestions for the relief of the people. Entirely taken up with his foolish hatreds and petty dislikes, he refused to see the distress. Everything appeared to the Cardinal under one of three heads—Freemasonry, Jansenism, or Chauvelinism. It was for attending a Freemasons' dinner that he caused the King to exile the husband of Madame de Mailly, but he failed to excite His Majesty to renewed oppression of the Jansenists. When, as he frequently did, he reverted to bitter abuse of Chauvelin and his admirers, who were termed Chauvelinists, Louis, tired of the subject, became mute and answered nothing. The King, however, hated the society of Freemasons, to be accused of belonging to which was to incur his displeasure. As for Fleury, he saw Freemasons everywhere,

and when the Prince de Tingry, son of the Maréchal Duc de Montmorency, was accused by Marville, the Police-Lieutenant, of belonging to that body, he sent for him from the Opera to come to him at once at Issy. Although the Prince knew absolutely nothing about the association, and proved it, the old man gave the serious de Tingry a violent scolding for a crime of which he understood nothing whatever. Fleury was, in fact, in his dotage completely. When, in October, 1740, the Duc d'Orléans returned furious from Fontainebleau because, the price of bread increasing, neither the King nor the Cardinal seemed in the least to care about the awful suffering throughout the kingdom, Fleury replied that "he did not understand anything about it" —a nice reply for the actual ruler of the State!

The Duc d'Orléans found himself treated with scant courtesy in other matters. Complaining of being unsuitably lodged at Fontainebleau, Fleury paid no attention to the complaint; while the hand of Madame Henriette, which had been promised long since to the Duc for his son, was suddenly refused to him merely on account of the ill-humour of the Cardinal against himself and his house. Fleury simply forced the King to refuse to keep his promise. The only pretext for a refusal was frivolous in the highest degree. Fleury said that if the Empress, wife of Charles VI., died, Madame Henriette, a child of fifteen, would be given to the Emperor as a second wife. The Emperor himself it was who died that same year.

In May, 1741, the young Duc de Chartres went in person to have it out with the Cardinal before witnesses.

"I have to thank you, monsieur," he said, "for the great pains you have taken in the matter of my marriage!"

The Cardinal reddened as he replied, "Yes, Monseigneur, I have thought that, under the circumstances of present conditions, it would be difficult to ally ourselves so openly with Bavaria; but there are other Princesses in Germany—three Princesses, for instance, of Salzbach, of whom the second is very good-looking and lively."

To this Chartres replied, with great hauteur, "Monsieur, there is another establishment here which is all that I require."

Again the Cardinal reddened with embarrassment, and remained five or six seconds before he could find strength to stammer out confusedly, "Monseigneur, of what do you wish to speak?"

"Monsieur, it is not a question of answering me, but of understanding me," said the Prince angrily.

The Cardinal murmured, "But, but, I have spoken to the Duc d'Orléans on the subject, and the King has it before him."

"Sir, I leave for the army in Flanders on Thursday," answered Chartres, and went out without leave-taking.

In the end the amiable Henriette, who was heart-broken at her disappointment about him, died unmarried at an early age.

Meanwhile in the Palais-Royal, the old home of the Regent, an unhappy state of affairs prevailed. The Regent's widow, the legitimatised daughter of Louis XIV. whom Philippe d'Orléans used to call Madame Satan, was terribly at cross-purposes with her son. "Never," says d'Argenson, "have I seen a little provincial town so quarrelsome as is the Palais-Royal to-day. It is the house of back-bitings, of calumnies, of repeatings, of feuds, and of detestable passions. Her Royal Highness

the Dowager Duchesse d'Orléans is like a dethroned Queen. After several years of her widowhood she has lost all authority over her son. She moans—she rages. The son is jealous to preserve his independence, the mother on the look-out to recapture her domination. She has wit, above all, woman's instincts. One must distrust them. I can answer for it that she joins bad faith to her pretended devotion. She often lies to the Holy Ghost, bears false witness against those whom she knows to merit but good words, nurses bitter hatreds and unjust suspicions. She is herself irreconcilable in her aversions and in those passions which make the heart black; witness her horrible rancour against her daughter Madame la Duchesse de Modène. In fact, one sees more than ever the existence of two parties in the members of the nobility inhabiting the Palais-Royal, of both sexes. They are those of the mother and those belonging to the son. One distinguishes them and points them out with the finger, and the august Princesse takes good care to maintain the division. The son only preserves silence, makes himself acquainted with all that takes place, and shows firmness in only appointing to places people who are for himself. My brother was for the mother—but, as for myself, I most decidedly belong to the son." Since the honest Marquis d'Argenson succeeded his more than doubtful brother the Comte in the position of Chancellor of the house of Orléans, he evidently knew what he put on record to be true. Upon reading his words, therefore, the student of history is inclined to believe that Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, the Regent, was not so far wrong when he christened the wife forced upon him by Louis XIV. by the euphonious title of Madame Satan.

CHAPTER XIII

The Great Frederick

1740—1742

FREDERICK, artist, musician, poet, and literary genius, who had long been held a prisoner by his father, and narrowly escaped being beheaded by him, spoke the French language better than German, and started in life a Frenchman at heart.

In his long confinement at Cästrin and at the castle of Rheinsberg, where he amused himself with literary occupations and in studying the arts of peace, none had imagined the military and patriotic ambitions that the young man was nursing in his heart. The early life of Frederick II., third King *in* Prussia, not *of* Prussia, and great-grandson of Frederick William, the "Great" Elector of Brandenburg, indeed in no manner foreshadowed his future greatness.

His father, Frederick William I., was noted for two crazes—one of these was avarice, the other the formation of a corps of giant soldiers. Every month of his reign he put away a large sum of money, and at the same time had the world ransacked for giants for his army. For an Irish giant seven feet high he paid a bounty of £1,300 to induce him to enlist. Not content with the giants already to be found, he bred them, like horses

or cattle. Whenever he found a tall young woman he had her married forcibly to one of his tallest soldiers.

An amusing story is told concerning one of these forced marriages. Frederick William, one day out riding in a forest, came upon a beautiful girl about six feet in height. She did not know the King by sight, and when, after having got into conversation with her, the stranger offered her a thaler or two to carry a note for him, she readily acceded to his request. The note was to the officer commanding the guard at a fortress not far distant, and ran as follows: "Instantly have the bearer of this letter married to Corporal Fritz of the Grenadiers."

The King rode away in one direction while the maiden started on her journey in another. Presently she realised that to accomplish her mission she would be compelled to miss an appointment that afternoon with her lover. The stately maid accordingly bethought her of a withered old crone who lived alone in a hut upon the borders of the forest. To her she repaired, and, giving half of the King's bounty to the beldame, entrusted her with the missive, and then tripped away gaily in search of her swain.

When Frederick William rode into the gates of the fortress in the evening he found the corporal married sure enough—but to the old hag!

History does not relate whether or no he had the handsome young giantess searched for and married after all to the same or another grenadier; but, judging from his passion for breeding giants, it seems more than probable that she did not escape some such fate.

The Kingdom of Prussia merely dated from the year 1701, and during his reign of twenty-seven years, from

1713, Frederick William increased the dominions of what had been the Electorate of Brandenburg by the conquest from Charles XII. of Pomerania, with Stettin and the islands at the mouth of the Oder. He was married to Sophia Dorothea of Hanover, daughter of George I. of England, and among her ten children the eldest son, Prince Frederick, and a daughter, Wilhelmina, incurred the ferocious hatred of their father. The King strove hard to induce the Prince to renounce the succession, which young Frederick announced his willingness to do—provided that the King would declare that he was not his father!

From childhood to the age of twenty Frederick William vented his rage upon the youth in the most savage manner, while the Prince, chiefly brought up by French refugees, conceived a strong passion for French literature. He was not, however, allowed to learn Latin, Greek, English, or any other language. After narrowly escaping death at his father's hands, Frederick attempted to escape to his uncle George II., in England. He was, however, captured, and sentenced to death as—a deserter. Frederick William, after executing before his son's eyes a young officer who had assisted his flight, kept the Prince a prisoner at Cästrin before carrying out upon him the sentence of death also.

In the meantime, however, the Emperor, the Kings of Sweden and Poland, and the rulers of the United States of Holland, contrived by their interposition to save the Prince. After a long imprisonment he was released from Cästrin, appointed a Councillor of War, and banished from the Court to Rheinsberg, when his father forced him to marry Elizabeth Christina, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick Bevern, in 1733.

With this Princess Frederick refused to cohabit, and various stories are told of his youthful excesses, which may or may not be true. Judging by his subsequent career, it seems pretty safe to say that the calumnies of his enemies were at all events exaggerated, for he could never have been a monster of vice.

At Rheinsberg Frederick followed his literary tastes and collected around him French and German savants. Being now left in peace he played upon the flute without fear of the instrument being broken over his head, dined without danger of having dishes flung at him, and was able to sit undisturbed to write verses or prose without expecting at every moment the apparition of a furious father, to drag him round by the hair of his head while kicking him with heavy riding-boots. While Frederick was writing the *Anti-Macchiavelli* and many other of his celebrated works, his crazy old father's heart was becoming softened towards him. He died after sobbing out upon his son's breast the words, "My God, my God, I die content with such a noble son to succeed me."

Owing to his freethinking ideas and wild admiration for French literature, Frederick at an early age held an exaggerated opinion of the talents of Voltaire, of whom, however, he formed his own estimate as a man, and by whom, it must be confessed, he was very sorely tried and subsequently treated with great ingratitude. However, he wrote in the following terms to Voltaire at a time when he was inclined to idolise his literary genius and wished him to come to him, "My Royal titles shall run thus: By the grace of God, King of Prussia, Elector of Brandenburg, possessor of Voltaire, etc." Frederick at the same time wrote to Algarotti of the poet, that he knew him to be a scoundrel,

but that he could make use of him and learn his French. French was, by-the-bye, the language which Frederick usually employed for his writings, but he never learned to write it with the pen of a Voltaire.

Upon his father's death Frederick inherited from him about a million and a quarter pounds sterling in surplus cash, and an army of seventy-two thousand soldiers, which had, however, had but very little, if any, experience in war.

Those of his judges who had before their eyes but the knowledge of his epicurean abode at Rheinsberg were astounded at the energy which was immediately displayed by the already very stout young man of twenty-eight, he having been born in 1712. Frederick almost instantly astonished the world by appearing in the light of a military despot—one who listened to no counsel and confided in no friend, while all the time bent upon enlarging his monarchy and determined to make of the dominions of the King of Prussia something more than a kingdom in name only.

Prussia, in common with the other nations of Europe, had guaranteed to Charles VI. his Pragmatic Sanction, and, upon her father's death, Frederick sent to the young Archduchess Maria Theresa an offer of help in money and his vote for her husband Duke Francis as Emperor. He, however, made conditions, which were that the Duchies of Glogau and Sagan, and the greater part of Silesia, to which the house of Hohenzollern laid claim, should be ceded to him. Hohenzollern in those days formed two small independent principalities of the Germanic confederation, called Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, and Hechingen was the original abode of the afterwards princely house of

Hohenzollern, to which the reigning dynasty in Prussia belongs. Its possessions were all finally ceded to Prussia in 1850. The name of Prussia was, until the eighteenth century, only applied to the former Duchy of Prussia on the Baltic and Vistula, whose inhabitants, a Lithuanian tribe called Porussi, or Borussi, whence the Látin name Borussia, had been conquered by the Teutonic knights in the thirteenth century. The rulers of Prussia were formerly called Kings *in* Prussia, thus expressing that their Germanic possessions were no kingdom; but when Frederick the Great firmly established his power, he also assumed the title of King *of* Prussia. Since his day the different provinces ruled over by the Hohenzollern dynasty have come to be considered a consolidated kingdom. Of these provinces Brandenburg was the original possession in Germany of the Prussian dynasty. The Teutonic knights, who finally conquered the Borussi in 1283, were constantly fighting against Poland and Lithuania until Casimir IV. of Poland compelled them to cede Western Prussia and Ermeland to Poland, the knights being left the remainder of Borussia merely as a fief under Poland. In 1525 the Margrave Albert of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the Order, after various wars, accepted all of Prussia as a duchy from Poland. A collateral descendant, John Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, inherited it in the year 1618. This Elector was descended from Frederick of Hohenzollern, Burgrave of Nuremberg, who had become possessor of Brandenburg in 1415 by foreclosure of a mortgage. It is therefore the Electorate of Brandenburg, not Prussia proper, which must be considered the nucleus of the present monarchy of that name, the two countries having been definitely united



From a mezzotint after George Vander Myn.

FREDERICK THE GREAT,
King of Prussia.

by John Sigismund, who was a Protestant. The third Elector, Frederick, the son of the "Great" Elector, Frederick William, by consent of the German Emperor, assumed the title of King in Prussia in 1702. He was the grandfather of King Frederick II.—called the "Great."

To return to that Monarch's overtures to the young Maria Theresa. They were rejected and his claims to Silesia laughed at. To the surprise of the world, this young King wasted no time in endeavouring to enforce them at the point of the bayonets of his untried army, of which he took the command in person. On December 13th, 1740, the year of his accession, he entered Lower Silesia, routed the handful of Austrians who were quartered on the frontier, and overran the province. In six weeks he returned to Berlin in triumph. It was the dead of winter, and Maria Theresa, almost incredulous of what had happened, was immediately honoured by the young King with proposals of peace and alliance. Privately, Frederick acknowledged that "ambition, interest, the desire to make people talk about me, carried the day, and I decided to make war."

As a matter of fact, Frederick had good cause to hate Austria and the Imperial Family. Among the most remarkable men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Count Friedrich Heinrich Seckendorf, born in 1673, who lived for a hundred years and five months. This German General and diplomatist served during his career England, Holland, the Emperor, Saxony, and Poland, and Austria again from 1715 to 1737; after which that country imprisoned him for three years at Gratz, on account of his want of success against the Turks. After his release, Seckendorf entered the service of Charles VII. of Bavaria for some years from 1740,

now fighting vigorously against Maria Theresa and the Austrians. Subsequently, regaining his former position in Austria, this Count of the Empire fell, in 1758, into the hands of Frederick the Great, who imprisoned him for six months in Magdeburg.

It was through the action of this Seckendorf towards Frederick in his early years that Austria made for herself the great enemy who well-nigh destroyed her. He had served, for upwards of twenty years, as Ambassador at Berlin, and been expressly charged by Austria to stifle the infancy of Frederick and prevent him from reigning, because Vienna feared in him a Prince of absolutely French sympathies. Thus Seckendorf it was who stirred up Frederick's father against him to an extent that the brutal German was ready to cut off the head of his son, whom he looked upon as being merely a little French marquis.

The little French marquis, however, was not stifled, but, alone in his imprisonment, although fat and feverish, he was laying up for himself a force of wonderful energy, a resistless will. When the time came, this writer of pretty French verses, the friend of Voltaire and player on the flute, burst forth from his bonds a man of iron. In his first great battle, that of Mollwitz in the spring of 1741, he, however, showed the white feather, and lost command of himself so completely as to fly with his broken cavalry miles from the scene of action. The battle, however, was gained by the courage of those under him, and never again was Frederick aught but calm and lucid under the most tremendous fire when fighting against overwhelming odds.

The fighting in Silesia during the previous winter had by no means been severe, as the Protestant inhabit-

ants were favourable to the invasion and opened the gates of the principal places. The personal courage of Frederick had, however, been previously well established when in the Polish war, a volunteer under Prince Eugène against the French, he sacrificed the pleasures of Rheinsberg for a few weeks. But, as we have already mentioned, Eugène displayed none of his old fire and activity during these operations; the Prussian Prince saw, therefore, nothing of that fury and carnage of war which came to him as a surprise at Mollwitz.

This battle decided the fate of Silesia. It was, however, the signal for a general war in Europe, known as the War of the Austrian Succession. Bavaria, backed up by France, now took up arms. A French, Saxon, and Bavarian army invaded Bohemia, while Frederick marched into Moravia. Thus the fortunes of the ambitious young Maria Theresa seemed at a low ebb, especially as England, although indulging in a desultory and unrecognised naval warfare with France, declined to assist her, maintaining neutrality on land.

How she was saved by Fleury we shall presently see; but in the meantime Frederick, disgusted with his French allies, after gaining a magnificent victory at Chotusitz, in the Bohemian province of Czaslau, in May, 1742, concluded a separate peace.

Accepting English mediation, Maria Theresa made peace with Prussia by a treaty concluded at Breslau on June 11th, 1742, and ceded to Frederick both Silesia and the county of Glatz, in the district of Breslau. This fertile county, separated by mountains from Bohemia and Austrian Silesia, had frequently been the cause of dispute between Poland and Bohemia, and it continued to change masters at times until Frederick definitely

retained its possession by the Peace of Hubertsburg in 1763. In the meantime he was enabled to retire from the contest in 1742, well contented with his present gains, if disgusted with the folly by which Fleury's effete rule left Austria strong and powerful instead of crushed and crawling in the dirt.

When Prussia withdrew victorious from the conflict, the Austrian arms triumphed everywhere against France and Bavaria, while England, thinking the moment now opportune, cut in upon the side of Austria.

CHAPTER XIV

A Royal Conspiracy and a Dotard's Follies

1741—1742

WHILE anxious to carry out the views of his great-grandfather Louis XIV., and aggrandise Catholic Bavaria, the King of France had no such wishes in favour of Protestant Prussia. Fleury openly moaned at the idea, the King did so secretly. He was, however, between two stools, Fleury and Madame de Vintimille, in 1740, and when in 1741 his mistress was expected to become a mother, she instantly took the upper hand.

Fleury trembled, succumbed like a pricked bladder, and at once commenced to make up to Frederick by writing to him that, "since Austria had not fulfilled her treaties, France would no longer guarantee her." At the same time this old man played at Versailles the comedy of pretending that he had no ideas, no intentions, did not know which way to go—enacting, in fact, the part of a simpleton. The Marquis d'Argenson says in his Memoirs, "He has made himself shorter in appearance, and goes about trying to excite pity," while the people at large exclaimed in their exasperation, "Will one never be able to kill off that old priest?"

Meanwhile he continued his old game of 1733, his old policy of delay and shilly-shally, instead of marching

at once upon Vienna, as he should have done in March, 1741. Nor would he listen to the urgent appeal of Frederick, which was to give the supreme command to the Comte de Belle-Isle, whose genius Frederick had recognised when meeting him recently with his splendid embassy to the German Diet for the Imperial election.

The ideas of both of these great commanders, the one then almost as untried as the other, had agreed in every particular. Belle-Isle pointed out to Frederick that the moment had come to dismember Austria, while Frederick showed to Belle-Isle the most efficacious manner in which France could co-operate in that dismemberment.

While Fleury did nothing, Frederick gained Mollwitz. The Cardinal still waited!

Fleury was, however, very near his fall in 1741. Being secretly anxious to obtain for his nephew the Duc de Fleury the post of First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, vacant by the death of the Duc de la Trémouille, the whole Court was against him. The two mistresses were in favour of the Duc de Luxembourg, and there were other applicants for the post of far higher birth than his nephew, but recently created a peer of France. Adopting his old tactics, Fleury sulkily retired to Issy, and while pretending to the King that he did not want the post, at the same time sent in his resignation as Minister, upon the grounds of ill-health. To this resignation Madame de Vintimille persuaded Louis to write an acceptance, saying that he regretted that the Cardinal did not feel strong enough to continue his labours, but, under the circumstances, he excused him from them.

That night the King passed with Madame de Mailly, who, we are told by the Abbé Soulavie, slept with her

hair arranged and wearing all her diamonds. The fatal letter, which was to decide the fate of the Cardinal—and France—lay upon the chimneypiece.

In the meantime the Cardinal had sent a sure person to Madame de Vintimille, warning her of the danger to which she would expose herself if she pushed him too far. She sent, in turn, word to her sister Mailly, requesting her not to allow the letter to go, but, on the other hand, to speak for the Duc de Fleury and to drop the Duc de Luxembourg. For she understood Louis' heart, and knew that he could not really make up his mind to do without Fleury for long—that, if disgraced, the Cardinal would probably be recalled.

In the middle of the night the King aroused Madame de Mailly. He was in a very melancholy state of mind, and said, "I thought that the Cardinal was really attached to me, but he is more so to his own credit." He seemed anxious to negotiate with his favourite for the suppression of the letter, and pointed out to her all the good services which the Cardinal had rendered to the State. Madame de Mailly, warned by her sister, replied to the King that he was the master—he could destroy the letter if he liked.

In a second the King sprang up cheerfully, threw the letter into the fire, and recovered all his good-humour. The next morning he personally appointed the Duc de Fleury to the coveted post, with a revenue of four hundred thousand livres. Thereupon the old hypocrite Fleury declared openly that the greatest injury had been done to his house, since he had never desired anything for his nephew. He even had the effrontery to rush in to the Queen with this ridiculous story, when Marie Lesczynska crushed him with the biting sarcasm of her reply.

A strange contrast was to be seen in the month of May, 1741, when these events took place. While the eighty-eight-year-old Cardinal, representing extreme weakness, was apparently once more fixed in perpetuity upon the seat of government at Versailles—fixed there as the man of Austria, the man of peace—throughout all Europe Louis XV. was being proclaimed as the King of war. Bavaria, Saxony, the countries on the Rhine, Poland, Spain, Sardinia, all were crying out to France, begging her to make treaties of alliance with them. All declared their firm intention to follow her to the tented field of glory should she but show the way.

Belle-Isle returned from his embassy bringing in person this expression of the wishes of Europe. He came with all the strength due to the personal favourite of three Monarchs—the new Emperor, Charles VII. (of Bavaria), Frederick Augustus III., King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, and Frederick, King of Prussia. But all that he could extort from Fleury, even so late as the month of July, 1741, was the vague promise of twenty-five thousand men. Austria had indeed gained a respite!

That which distressed Belle-Isle more than all else was the decided change which he found in the Court that had sent him away to procure the election of Charles VII. Then there had been, at all events, some ideas favourable to the King of Prussia; upon his return there was nothing but dislike seen at Versailles for the Protestant King. The Court, the Royal Family, so essentially Catholic, now seemed to have become more Austrian even than Spanish—all that they wanted was the establishment in Italy of a kingdom for the Infante, Don Philip, husband of the King's daughter. If only

this could be arranged—what, they said, was the need for war with their dear friend, Maria Theresa? And Prussia was temporised with more than ever. As week by week there came from the little Infanta in Spain a long letter to her father, the King, which had been carefully dictated by the Queen, Elizabeth Farnese, Frederick commenced to grow irritable, the new Emperor was also out of temper, and meanwhile the year dragged out its length. August came—and September. It almost seemed as though it were Frederick who was the enemy.

At length, on September 13th, 1741, Maria Theresa, with one child in her arms and about to become the mother of another, was enabled to play her great stroke, her pathetic comedy, which assured to her the assistance of those very Hungarians who for so long past had suffered by fire and sword at the hands of Austria on account of their religion. Holding up her child, she begged the Hungarian nobles for their assistance. Chivalrously drawing their swords, they forgot old injuries and, headed by Count Batthyàny, cried, "Let us die for Maria Theresa—our King!" Thus they forged their own fetters—which still exist.

This event occurred only four days after the death of Madame de Vintimille, the only counsellor of any weight whom Louis XV. had possessed to help to make a man of him in spite of Fleury.

The murderers of this poor woman had foreseen only too surely that the King would insist upon no inquiry of any serious nature as to the cause of her death. The doctors were too prudent to say what they discovered, and it would seem that Louis himself would rather not push the inquiry too far. He knew full well that there

was a party of the clergy who had seriously approached the devout young Dauphin and asked this thirteen-year-old boy to become their protector. Realising that these persons would be only too willing to welcome this boy to the throne in his own place, he was afraid to push them too far, for fear that he might himself follow Madame de Vintimille sooner than he expected. So the King held his tongue, and contented himself with weeping for his loss alternately with Madame de Toulouse in the entresol and Madame de Mailly in the apartments overhead.

The Dauphin, even at this early age, was heavy in temperament and heavy in body; as he grew older he became enormously fat, and, as he was disinclined to movement, continued so. He did not share the predilection for field-sports and the chase which was common to all the other members of the Bourbon race. This may perhaps have been because he was unfortunate on the occasion of his earlier shooting parties. Upon the first of these he shot and killed a man, while upon that which succeeded he wounded a lady severely!

While following a very sedentary life, the youth shared with his sisters views about Austria which agreed with those of Fleury. This old Cardinal, when interrogated by the Dauphin as to the justice or injustice of the war, allowed himself to be forced, as it were, to confess to the Prince that it was "an unjust war." All who heard this fall from the lips of the Minister were horrified; but the Dauphin was thenceforward the hope of those who styled themselves "*les honnêtes gens.*"

As the war was being continued by Frederick alone, and when that Prince was pushing hard the troops of Maria Theresa, Fleury nevertheless did not scruple to

give vent to very similar sentiments before the Council of State. He exclaimed of the Queen of Hungary, "She is like Jesus upon the mountain tried by the devil. But the angels will bear her up."

Meanwhile the Dauphin was made the nucleus, the kernel, around which, little by little, all the retrograde elements in the Court collected. The Spanish-Austrian intrigue, the Royal Family, the clergy, the Queen to whom Spain was so dear, the two-faced intriguers such as Stainville (later Duc de Choiseul) from Lorraine, the Polish Jesuits—all these formed but one party with the Dauphin, and it was a party formed with the intention of working upon the feelings of the King.

Louis was very much attached to his daughters, even to the extent of being jealous of them. The elder, the Infanta, was tall, handsome, and cunning; she endeavoured by all means in her power to wind herself around the King. The nature of Madame Henriette, a little younger, and weakly in person, was singularly sweet. Her spirit remained completely broken when her match with the Duc de Chartres was broken off, but she never complained. It was, however, by working upon the King's jealousy of the Orléans family that Fleury contrived without difficulty to cause the engagement to be broken. She remained timid and trembling, the mere instrument of the Dauphin, until she died aged twenty-five. Another daughter, Adélaïde, only ten years old, already possessed a different nature. Full of Polish vivacity, she, even at that early age, caused astonishment by the liveliness of her sallies and, indeed, uncouth tricks of manner and speech. From an early age the King favoured her; alone of his daughters he kept her always at home, never sent her to a convent for education.

All of these sung the same song, of which the refrain was—first Spain, second Austria! All alike hoped to see an Infanta of Spain betrothed before long to the infant eldest son of Maria Theresa, afterwards to become the Emperor Joseph II. This child of Don Philip and the French Princesse was now only six months old; but that did not matter. The Bourbons in Spain, ever anxious to despoil Austria, were also ever anxious to conclude matrimonial alliances with her; and the Bourbons in France always were of the same mind as their cousins. The Imperial Family always seemed to them something grander than themselves, worthy to be courted even when most considered as a cause for jealousy. Imperial the Austrian family was indeed to become once more before long, although it was only owing to the election of Duke Francis of Lorraine, her husband, to the dignity of Emperor when Charles VII. died, that Maria Theresa earned that title of Empress by which she was so well known. Her son Joseph II. eventually married, as his first wife, the daughter of the Infanta, wife of Don Philip, while the wishes of the Bourbons were likewise crowned with success in that marriage—so unfortunate for France—of the Empress's daughter Marie Antoinette to the son of the Dauphin who became Louis XVI.

Having now explained the situation, it will be easily realised that Fleury, in blocking the war, was but acting in accordance with the views of the *honnêtes gens*. He was directly acceding to the vows of that Royal Family which wept when France gained a victory, which had formed what may be called a "family conspiracy" against the very kingdom over which it ruled.

The older the Dauphin grew the more clearly could

the existence of this family conspiracy be seen and realised, although it worked underground, and worked upon the King only through those influences—bigoted religion and love for Austria—in which Cardinal Fleury had brought him up from infancy.

The only possible opposing influences to these were to be found in his mistresses. Of these, Madame de Mailly, being all heart and no politician, did not count. Her sister Mademoiselle de Nesle, who possessed grand and patriotic instincts, was poisoned before she could accomplish anything. There are yet to come Madame de la Tournelle, who became Duchesse de Châteauroux, and who wished to make of Louis an absolute Monarch in the highest degree, and Mademoiselle Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, who would, if she could, have instilled some ideas of literature and philosophy into the King's head.

But if ever for a time he seemed to tolerate any change or listen to anything new, or in any way to take the initiative in a manly way to break away from the leadership of those who led him, it was merely from hatred and jealousy of the Dauphin. And when he broke away from, or acted from antagonism to, the Dauphin, his daughters picked up the broken threads, and bound him once more in the meshes of the family conspiracy.

While on the death of Madame de Vintimille two classes of interested persons were already trying to assuage the King's grief by presenting him with either Mademoiselle Poisson or the deceased favourite's sister Madame de la Tournelle, the question of war or no war was still being vigorously discussed at Versailles. It must not be forgotten that in July, 1741, Belle-Isle had

extorted from the Cardinal the promise of twenty-five thousand men to help the allies. The war was at last embarked on, but in a manner to meet the wishes of Fleury, the Noailles, and the Royal Family, not at all upon the sure road leading to success as pointed out by the King of Prussia. It seemed, indeed, as if the object of Versailles were to wound Frederick as much as possible. His views were disregarded in two matters. Instead of making Belle-Isle Commander-in-chief, the Maréchal Duc de Broglio, formerly one of the Regent's *roués* and an ill-mannered and incompetent General, who had recently most grossly insulted Frederick, was given the principal command: he was sent to supersede Belle-Isle on pretence of the ill-health of the latter. The French army, however, did not march straight into Vienna, which was left undefended by the flying Maria Theresa, but was foolishly stopped short when only six leagues from that city, and instructed to take Prague, in Bohemia. Once again—instead of making use of Hanover as a battle-ground—George II., King of England and ruler of Hanover, the uncle and bitter enemy of Frederick, was accorded the neutrality of his Hanoverian dominions. And yet, already in April, 1741, six English ships had attacked four French vessels near Martinique, while in May the British took from Spain the city of Cartagena in South America, burned six galleys, and captured six Spanish ships-of-war.

It was not until November, 1741, that the troops under the Comte Maurice de Saxe at length fell upon Prague, which was taken by assault upon the 18th, owing to the marked bravery of Colonel Chevert, his subordinate; and in the meantime Belle-Isle obtained elsewhere that command which he had been refused of French troops.

The Saxon and Bavarian armies were also before Prague. King Augustus III. of Poland, Elector of Saxony, presented to Belle-Isle a sword with a diamond-encrusted hilt, and in that same month of November appointed him Generalissimo of all his Saxon troops.

The Spaniards had already marched forty thousand men into Spain, through Roussillon and Languedoc, and the Infante Don Philip followed, to join them at about the same time as the French arms appeared before Prague. Upon arrival, the Spaniards found that Sardinia was inimical to them, owing to the old quarrel about Milan, which the Savoyard King would rather have died than see pass into the hands of Spain. Accordingly that Piedmontese Prince joined hands with Austria in 1742, although he commenced the war as the friend of France. Before Prague the Comte de Belle-Isle, feeling the disgrace of the appointment of Broglio over his head, fell back upon the diplomatic position which he still held of Envoy-Extraordinary to the Princes of the Empire; but he found himself unjustly exposed to numerous insults from the various Lieutenant-Generals who were jealous of him. Thus, while following the threads of the negotiations with the Germanic Princes, he found himself compelled to waste endless time in writing letters in order to right himself in view of the false accusations and calumnies made against him.

Belle-Isle's diplomatic functions were no sinecure; everything seemed to be giving way under his feet. The Prussian and the Saxon he found floating, his friend Frederick especially being angered at finding, upon the top of French disregard of his advice, that Comte Maurice de Saxe was being set up by France in a measure against

him. This General in the French service was one of the three or four hundred bastards of whom the late Augustus II. of Poland and Saxony was supposed to be the father. His mother was the Swedish Countess of Kœnigsmark, and having aspired to the Russian Duchy of Courland, Saxe had displayed the unheard-of folly of declaring himself jealous of the King of Prussia. Frederick, feeling himself alone, was already calmly determining to fight for his own hand, and make peace when he had conquered that which he fought for, without considering his perfidious allies. Nor did he disguise his views from Belle-Isle, whom he trusted.

The situation was rendered worse by the fact that the hereditary dominions of the Emperor in Bavaria were already overrun and in the possession of Austria. In March, 1742, Belle-Isle posted off to Versailles to represent the situation, where he found, upon arrival, that the Cardinal had been abusing him worse than a pickpocket, and had held him in the greatest aversion ever since he had discovered that the King had commenced to recognise his merits. The Cardinal's petty jealousy was aroused, and he was determined upon his disgrace. Yet, by his ability, Belle-Isle had succeeded in placing the Imperial crown upon the head of the nominee of France, after conciliating all the opposing German interests, and his only crime was that he was beloved by three Kings, the allies of France, none of whom cared to act except in conjunction with himself.

The evening of his arrival at Versailles, at the hour of seven, the Cardinal refused to see Belle-Isle, sending word that it was late—that they were both tired, and that he required repose. The next day he was received

by the Cardinal, but very coldly; the interview only lasted for a minute and half.

Proceeding to the King's levée, His Majesty, in turn, would scarcely speak to the Ambassador who had done so much; his disgrace now seemed certain—the Bastille loomed ahead. To the surprise of the courtiers, who were turning their back upon the fallen man, and to the disgust of the Cardinal, against whose wishes the King acted, two days later this disgraced soldier and diplomatist was placed at the top of the ladder. Louis had appointed the man whom he would not speak to as *Maréchal de France*, and in addition endowed him with the rank and title of *Duc et pair héréditaire de Vernon*. All the partisans of Fleury, Broglio, and the Tencins had their noses put out of joint, while the disconcerted Cardinal attempted to explain this sudden promotion to the Duc de Chartres by saying, "You see, we could not do without him down there; it was necessary to send him back again."

But the fact was that there was one good heart at Versailles which bled for the Frenchmen whose lives were being wasted by the follies of Fleury, the incompetence of Broglio—one woman who knew that if Belle-Isle fell, the army would surely be left to perish unaided and unfed. Madame de Mailly it was who had forced the King to listen to what Belle-Isle had to say, and who, by so doing, crushed all his enemies and their jealousies together. The Emperor also appointed Belle-Isle a Prince of the Empire—but all these honours came late in the day.

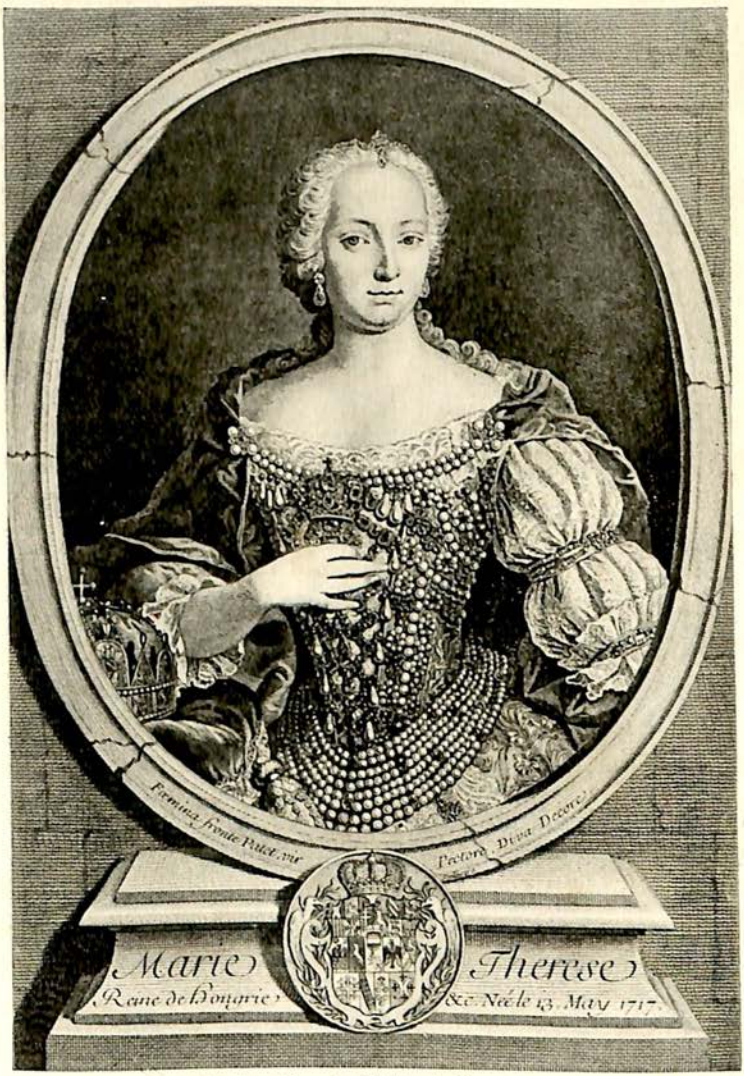
Frederick, finding the Saxons, like the French, were not backing him up, and being very closely pressed, gave battle to the forces of Maria Theresa. So certain

was the Queen of Hungary of the victory, that she was debating in advance whether she would pardon or behead Frederick, when the news came of the crushing defeat which he had inflicted upon her arms at Chotusitz.

Maria Theresa then became humble and took a very different tone; while Frederick wrote to Broglio that he was now quits with him and France, and would make peace alone. At the same time, he gave Broglio some sound advice, by ignoring which that incompetent leader got himself soundly beaten and compelled to shut himself up with his army within the walls of Prague. This occurred in May, 1742. Belle-Isle hastily hurried to Frederick, and endeavoured to prevent him from treating. The newly created Duc de Vernon even lost his temper with the King of Prussia when he found him inexorable.

Thereupon Frederick greeted him with a surprise. From his pockets he extracted several letters which Fleury had written to Austria, in which he offered to desert Prussia, to force the King of that country to restore Silesia if the Emperor were only given Bohemia. They were miserable and disgraceful letters, the outpourings of a dotard. In them Fleury related all his secret sorrows; the spirit of the priest, of the police-spy, of the coward, of the child telling tales, made them the more remarkable. Formerly, in 1737, he had written similar letters, accusing Chauvelin. In these, produced from Frederick's pockets, Belle-Isle found something else equally cowardly. For he himself was denounced by name as being the sole cause of the war with Austria.

Maria Theresa had caused these letters to be printed and scattered broadcast throughout all Europe, in order to shame France and make of her a laughing-stock. Poor Belle-Isle was dumbfounded. A patriotic



From an engraving after the picture by Martin de Meytens.

EMPRESS MARIE THERESE.

Frenchman, he suffered for his country's shame far more than for himself. Frederick kept his word—he made peace with Austria at Breslau and arranged friendly terms with England. Holland, Denmark, Poland, Saxony, and Sardinia all followed suit. Louis XV., King of France, at whose feet Europe had fallen in 1741, found himself in August, 1742, worse than alone, for he was saddled with the useless allies Bavaria and Spain.

Now indeed were hard days beginning for France. Broglio, shut up for months past in Prague, was beginning to be short of food, nor could further supplies be obtained. The Saxons and Prussians had gone away, the winter was coming on. The cut-throat bands of barbaric cavalry were everywhere in the country around, severing all communications with the outside world. Well might Maria Theresa laugh and say, "I hold the French in the hollow of my hand."

The shameless Fleury now descended to prayers that Broglio's army might be allowed to come out. He was mocked at. "Yes, as prisoners," replied Maria Theresa, "after they have yielded up their arms."

The heroic Belle-Isle now nobly contrived to get into Prague, generously to shut himself up with Broglio and assist him. His energy was terrible. Now commenced a series of furious sorties, every one of which was a pitched battle. The Austrian batteries were charged, the guns spiked, their troops cut to pieces, their General, Monti by name, taken prisoner. The horses of the batteries were carried into Prague to be eaten by the garrison.

By the end of August already a murmur, almost amounting to a roar, could be heard in Paris, in Versailles. It was a cry for the recall of Chauvelin to hold the helm

of the worse than rudderless State. But, while Maurepas and Noailles trembled and feared his return, Fleury found a voice to speak against it. The interests of religion, he said, required that Chauvelin should be kept at a distance. But he agreed that the Council required strengthening. He strengthened it by the admission of the younger d'Argenson, the Comte, and by Cardinal Tencin. The latter, whose intriguing powers had hitherto made people believe that he had brains, when once in the Royal Council proved to be worse than useless.

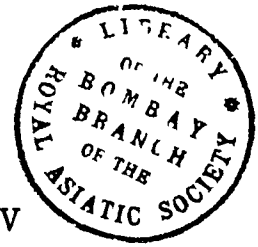
Fleury was persuaded by a friend, however, to attempt the relief of Prague by sending an army which was inactive under the command of M. de Maillebois. This Maréchal, a brave and capable warrior who was the hero of Bassignano in 1745, was descended from Colbert, the bitter enemy of Fouquet, who was Belle-Isle's ancestor. The families were still jealous of one another, but Belle-Isle had gone ahead. Maillebois had advanced as far as Egra when Stainville, the double-faced Lorrainer and spy of Austria, told Fleury that, peace being so near at hand, it would be a pity to spoil the chances of concluding it by sending forward this army. Thereupon Maillebois was recalled by Fleury, and the French troops left to starve in Prague. There a dreadful winter had set in, and what made it worse, the inhabitants of the town, starving like the garrison, were hostile to the French soldiers. Ammunition now fell short, and wood for fuel became very scarce. The troops made sorties, using the bayonet or the sabre alone, and brought in a little bread, a little wood. They generously shared all that they had with the inhabitants, who were ready at any moment to cut their throats.

Meanwhile the King cared nothing for the recall of Chauvelin, whose name alone would have frightened Austria; he cared nothing, moreover, for his army shut up in Prague, to whose sufferings he was indifferent. His mind was taken up with one idea alone. Having forgotten Madame de Vintimille, he had become mad with passion for the young widow her sister, Madame de la Tournelle, the reputed daughter of the Condé, M. le Duc, and Madame de Nesle. But she was a *rusée* young lady, one, moreover, who already had in the Duc d'Agenois, afterwards Duc d'Aiguillon, the nephew of the Duc de Richelieu, another lover. She was determined to sell herself very dearly to the King, to drive a hard and cruel bargain, one of the terms of which was that her sister de Mailly should be driven out with ignominy from the Court, exiled for ever from Versailles. The King was wholly taken up with the conditions of his bargain with the lady; the army in Prague might rot or freeze for all he cared—and it almost did both.

Maria Theresa meanwhile was fanning and nursing her vengeance. By Fleury's supplications her pride was immensely increased. She was looking forward with glee to the immense humiliation of France when Prague should fall, when Fleury suddenly thought of writing a letter to Belle-Isle. Since he had nothing better to say, the Cardinal remarked that "the army ought to come home."

This was enough for Belle-Isle, that dauntless soul whose wounded chest had never recovered from the terrible wound received many years previously. He determined to come home—to bring the army through the bitter frost and snow away from Prague. And he did it! Leaving the gallant Colonel Chevert with the wounded

and the invalids to guard the city, with fourteen thousand men he came out one night. For the first time now was seen a horse artillery, one which flew about from flank to flank. Belle-Isle had invented it, and with it protected himself from the hordes of savage cavalry—he had thirty guns with him under the command of the brave la Vallière. For day after day, night after night, over the frozen plains, through the icy mountains, Belle-Isle and his half-starved army fought their way. From the night of December 16th to December 26th, 1742, they struggled on without covering for the fearful nights passed in the snow. But, in spite of dreadful losses, upon this latter date they reached Egra in triumph. Chevert also saved his men. Maria Theresa in the end lost her vengeance. In the meantime, the King also had his triumph. On December 10th the bargain was concluded. That night he appeared with his new mistress at the opera.



CHAPTER XV

The Installation of a Favourite

1742

THE Duchesse de Mazarin, Mistress of the Robes to the Queen, was the mother of the Marquise de Nesle and grandmother of Madame de Mailly and her sisters. One of her daughters was married to that spiteful and witty maker of personal verses and epigrams, Comte Phelipeaux de Maurepas, who was thus uncle by marriage to Madame de Mailly and her sisters. The Duchesse de Mazarin, who up to the age of fifty-four made herself ridiculous with the Marquis du Mesnil, upon whom she wasted her substance, was particularly hateful to the King, since she it was who first informed the Queen of his connection with her grand-daughter Madame de Mailly. Accordingly, the three younger sisters of Mailly, to whom their grandmother gave a home, had not been presented to the King when Madame de Mazarin died in 1742. Two of these young ladies, the Marquise de Flavacourt and, the youngest of the Nesles, Madame de la Tournelle, were with her when she died; whereupon her heir, Maurepas, and his wife, their aunt, were guilty of the greatest inhumanity to the two young women, whom they apparently detested.

No sooner was the Duchesse dead, notwithstanding

that the Marquis de Flavacourt was away at the war, and that Madame de la Tournelle—a widow—like her sister had no home, than Madame de Maurepas sent them word to get out at once from the house, which had now become hers. The inhuman aunt gave, moreover, instructions to the effect that not so much as a glass of water was to be given to Madame de Flavacourt and Madame de la Tournelle if they demanded it.

Hortense Félicité, the former of these ladies, who had a temperament not easily disturbed, took matters calmly and philosophically. Not so Marie Anne, the young widow. Breathing fire and flames against Maurepas and his wife, she rushed off to all her relations and friends to complain of them. The more sedate Hortense meanwhile pursued other tactics.

Calling for a sedan-chair, Madame de Flavacourt had herself transported the ten miles from Paris to Versailles. There she ordered the bearers to withdraw the supporting poles, to set the sedan-chair down in the centre of the Court of the Ministers, and to go away and leave her. There she remained, sitting in state in front of the château, the abode of the King and Court, saying aloud, "I am young, I am without father and without mother [her father was in exile at Caen]; my husband is away, my relations have cast me off. No doubt that heaven will succour me."

She waited for the influences of heaven, while courtiers came and went, wondering to see a lady seated alone in a sedan-chair in such an extraordinary position. At length the Duc de Gesvres, passing, saw a beautiful young lady whose face he thought he knew; indeed, it would have been hard not to recognise it—she was a lovely brunette with beautiful eyes. Opening the door of the

chair, he exclaimed in his astonishment, "Madame de Flavacourt! What in the name of heaven brings you here like this? Do you not know that your grandmother is just dead?"

"How do I find myself here?" replied the facetious lady. "Well, learn that M. de Maurepas and his wife have bundled my sister la Tournelle and myself out of the house like a couple of adventuresses. I suppose they fear that we may cost them something to keep. I have not the slightest idea what has become of my sister, but, you see, here am I, in the hands of God; and here I shall remain until something happens."

The Duc de Gesvres, in his surprise, rushed in to the King, whom he brought to the window to witness the extraordinary spectacle in the centre of the courtyard, saying, "Your Majesty, look at that chair. For the last two hours it has contained Madame de Flavacourt."

"Who on earth placed her there?" inquired the King.

"It is the action of her own ingenious brain," replied Gesvres. "Madame de Maurepas has turned her out, and the lady now has placed herself under the protection of God."

"Go and fetch her in quick," said Louis. "Give her a lodging in the château, and send also for her sister. In a moment Gesvres brought in Hortense Félicité to present her to the King, who laughed with her gaily and gave her a set of apartments which had at one time been occupied by her sister Mailly, while promising her the post of First Lady of the Palace. Madame de la Tournelle, upon her arrival, was given a set of rooms which had formerly belonged to Vauréal the Bishop of Rennes.

Thus, by her sister's ingenuity did Marie Anne first obtain admission to Versailles. There was yet a third sister who had not yet penetrated to the sacred precincts of Royalty. This was Diane Adélaïde de Nesle, who for some reason was always called Mademoiselle de Montcarvel. She was still unmarried, but Madame de la Tournelle, in combination with the Duc de Richelieu, who became the King's go-between in arranging the bargain with Marie Anne, proposed shortly to make of her a duchesse, by marrying her to a widower, the Duc de Lauraguais. In the meantime, the young widow made disgraceful use of Mademoiselle de Montcarvel, by sending her to the King at Choisy when he became impatient because he was unable to conclude the treaty with herself. In this manner she kept up his interest in the family which supplied four mistresses to the Monarch, and would have supplied five had not the virtue of Madame de Flavacourt remained unshaken. Doubtless this virtue was greatly aided by the action of the Marquis her husband. That gallant soldier vowed to Hortense Félicité, his wife, that he would assassinate her if she should allow herself, like her sisters, to be cajoled by the King.

Madame de Flavacourt, once she found herself comfortably installed at Versailles, brought to her aid the same equanimity of temperament by which she had introduced herself there. When M. de Maurepas, seeing her star now in the ascendant, came and made his humble excuses for his conduct, she willingly accepted them. By this discretion she was, from the first, enabled to live at the Court in peace and quiet with all men. Not so la Tournelle: from the first moment this haughty young lady declared war against Maurepas and his wife,

openly saying that she would lose no opportunity of humbling them or doing them an injury.

This she at times succeeded in doing; but Maurepas was an enemy she had better have left alone. Throughout her career many of the obscene songs which were circulated against her probably emanated from his scurrilous pen, while, although she notably humbled Maurepas during her short last illness, she herself attributed her approaching death to poison administered by his instructions.

While the King's ardent desire for Madame de la Tournelle was heightened by the fact that she was the known mistress of the Duc d'Agenois, whom she adored, the Monarch made use of the infamous Duc de Richelieu to separate her lover, who was his nephew, from Marie Anne. This that past-master in the art of intrigue accomplished by an ignoble ruse, worthy of himself.

By promising that he would present her at the Court, he induced a very handsome lady of Languedoc, who had been his own mistress, to simulate a hopeless passion for the Duc d'Agenois, while that young man was away from Madame de la Tournelle. D'Agenois at first refused to be moved, but the lady wrote him such frantic letters of love and devotion that at last he foolishly allowed himself to be flattered, and replied, saying that "he hoped to be able to wipe away the tears from her pretty face and relieve her anguish"—or in some such style. This letter, handed on to Richelieu, was given to the King. Louis, in turn, showed it to la Tournelle, saying that surely now there existed no cause for her continued cruelty towards himself.

The lady now determined to yield, and insisted upon the following terms. Her sister Montcarvel having now

become Duchesse de Lauraguais, she was to be created a duchesse also, and in her own right—the Duchesse de Châteauroux. It was simply in order to create this precedent in the family that she had obtained the assistance of Richelieu to procure the elderly widower Lauraguais for her sister. He had been previously married to a Mademoiselle d'O, and had two children whom he wished taken care of, and when Mademoiselle de Montcarvel was given him for a bride, was entirely unaware of the fact that the King took more than an ordinary interest in her as being the sister of Madame de Mailly.

That lady, who had now been for ten years the King's mistress, still continued to appear at the little suppers in his *petits cabinets*. They were, however, but sad affairs, unrelieved by the slightest spark of gaiety. She reproached Louis with his attentions towards her sister la Tournelle, who had commenced to treat her with raillery and mockery. He treated her with cold indifference, even when the unfortunate woman threw herself at his feet in floods of tears and begged for mercy and a little kindness. He, however, was thinking only of her sister, who was making it one of her conditions that Madame de Mailly should be banished and her apartments given to herself.

While the King was becoming thin and ill from the delay in gaining his ends, he was in the habit of visiting Madame de la Tournelle of an evening in disguise. Maurepas, anxious to defeat that lady's plans, was watching and spying upon him when, one evening, the Duc de Richelieu, accompanying the King, flashed a lantern in the face of a man whom he observed in a dark corner of a corridor. Although Maurepas covered his face, Richelieu, who knew him, drew his sword and

was about to run it through the body of the imprudent Minister, when he threw himself flat on the ground at the feet of Louis and begged for mercy. Thereupon the King, always friendly to Maurepas, good-naturedly lifted him up, telling him that soon he would let him know whom he sought thus in disguise, and present him to her into the bargain.

The Comte d'Argenson had meanwhile joined in the intrigue, and, playing the false friend to Madame de Mailly, advised her to retire for three days to Paris. He assured her that the King was annoyed, and that she would be wise to leave him alone for a day or two, when he would become himself again. Madame de Flavacourt, however, who was sorrowfully watching the course of events, told her the truth; which was that the Comte d'Argenson was a cunning rogue working in their sister la Tournelle's interests.

At length, after a final interview with the King, Madame de Mailly came out weeping, followed by Louis, who was speaking to her with kindness and affection. This incident took place under the observation of the courtiers.

His final words, spoken out loud, were much in the same perfidious style as those in which he had addressed M. le Duc when he intended to exile him from Versailles: "On Monday at Choisy then, Madame la Comtesse—on Monday! I hope that you won't keep me waiting." On Monday Louis had arranged to pass the night at Choisy with Madame de la Tournelle, who was to be conducted there in state by the greatest ladies of the Court, including several duchesses and Mademoiselle de la Roche-sur-Yon, a Princesse of the Blood. The Duc de Villeroi, the Prince de Soubise, the

Maréchals Ducs de Duras, de Bouillon, de Guerchy, and de Villars, the Prince de Tingri, the Maréchal Marquis de Meuse, and several other great nobles were invited to be present at Choisy that evening to witness the official installation of the new favourite, all of whose demands had been agreed to.

In addition to the duchy of Châteauroux, these included the same condition of luxury as that in which Louis XIV. had kept the Marquise de Montespan, with, moreover, the promise of legitimation for any possible children of the union. The whole of this treaty was made public, and the duchy registered in the parliamentary records amid a great flourish of trumpets.

One worthy couple there were, however, at the Court who refused to attend at Choisy upon this abominable occasion, which was to be celebrated there by a quadrille party and a grand supper. These were the Queen's favourite friends the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes, who declined respectfully but firmly, although the King personally requested their presence. The Duc de Luynes was all the more courageous in making this refusal for his wife and himself, as he had something to lose. He was just expecting to receive the much-coveted *cordon bleu* of the Ordre du Saint Esprit, but, as he knew would be the case, the King passed him over and made him wait for it for years.

CHAPTER XVI

The War of the Austrian Succession

1742 AND LATER

DURING the month of January, 1743, Cardinal Fleury died—at last—to the delight of France. So anxiously was his death looked forward to that the courtiers were cracking jokes upon the subject of his approaching dissolution in the antechamber of the room in which the old man was in the death-throes.

A sigh of relief arose from the whole kingdom when this old man of ninety had disappeared from the scene, and when Louis XV., at the dictation of his family, declared that "in future he intended to govern by himself," hope arose once more in every breast.

The Duc de Noailles, who had been commanding on the frontier of the Low Countries, now found himself warmly backed up by the Duc de Richelieu and his bosom friend the Duchesse de Châteauroux, with the result that he was admitted into the Royal Council upon equal terms with Cardinal Tencin. The latter had been proposed to Louis as First Minister, to replace Fleury; but the King, parrot-like, repeating the words put into his mouth by Châteauroux, said sharply and drily, "Above all—no more priests!"

The favourite, in the meantime, imagined that she had a lucky star, and she proposed to follow its influence

by making of the King the greatest Monarch in the world. Unfortunately, the first step which she dictated, the admission of Noailles to the Council, did not assist that project; while, as the Maréchal and Maurepas between them contrived to set the King more than ever against Chauvelin, Louis voluntarily sent that able Minister into a more distant exile, instead of recalling him to Versailles at a time when his services would have been invaluable.

The Duc de Noailles had, unfortunately, changed greatly since the early days of the Regency. Then he had been full of enlightened ideas, and had striven hard to assist the Duc d'Orléans upon the path of progress. With old age, however, had come indecision, with, moreover, a noisy, overbearing manner at the Council which intimidated the others present. These he browbeat, while his actions were so extravagant that, to assist his violent and changeable arguments, he would fling his hat up into the air. He now appeared without heart, character, or any solid foundation; further, while making believe to have become devout, he backed up the Spanish-Austrian conspiracy of the Royal Family. Richelieu and Châteauroux soon regretted what they had done; but once Noailles had been admitted to the Council by their means, they were afraid to gainsay him in anything.

Not content with hanging and imprisoning the harmless inhabitants of the city of Prague, Maria Theresa, now thirsting for vengeance, flung her troops upon the Rhine. Before long, moreover, to the delight of the Secretaries of State, they were, owing to the exigencies of the service, relieved of the presence of Noailles, who meddled in everything, as he was sent off to his command

in the Low Countries. There it seemed as if he would soon have George II. of England to contend with, for Pitt and Carteret had succeeded the pacific Walpole at the head of affairs in the country across the Channel. However, owing to the loyalty to France shown by Frederick, for a time the English did not interfere.

Although he had made peace on his own account, the Prussian King paralysed his uncle George by threatening to draw the sword once more if, with the troops that he had in Flanders, he made a step in the direction of the Empire. He overawed the Dutch also, who had an army all ready to do the bidding of the German King of England. At the same time the active Frederick visited the various German Princes of the Empire, and encouraged them to form a neutral army wherewith to cover Bavaria. England, however, declared that the election of the Bavarian Elector, which had been regularly made, was illegal; illegal also was, she said, the proclamation which had been made at Lintz of that Prince as Archduke of Austria. Charles VII. had, however, been duly crowned with the imperial crown at Frankfort on February 12th, 1742, and had also been crowned at Prague.

Meanwhile, on the Rhine, Mentzel, the barbaric cavalry leader, was threatening the peasants in his proclamations, "that those who did not come to him would be forced to cut themselves in pieces and to cut off their own noses and ears." Maria Theresa, while disclaiming all responsibility for these terrifying proclamations, recompensed and promoted Mentzel. She was in high spirits since her General, Khevenhuller, had entered and plundered Munich, and the affairs of the Bavarian Emperor were at a very low ebb.

At length, after being delayed for a year owing to the manœuvres of Frederick, England, and Holland also, at her bidding, plunged into the war on the side of Austria. George II. sent an army into Germany, and the Dutch helped him with a reinforcement of twenty thousand men. Strange to say, it was not until some nine or ten months later that France, originally merely acting as an ally of the Emperor, declared war in form against Maria Theresa and George. This was on March 15th, 1744, and already the Emperor, driven from his hereditary dominions, whence Broglio had retreated, had sought refuge at Frankfort with nothing but his empty titles and a crippled France to support him.

In the June before the declaration of war a great battle was fought between the French on one side, commanded by the Maréchal Duc de Noailles, and George II. on the other, in command of the allies. This was the battle of Dettingen, which was fought on June 27th, 1743, the place being a village of Bavaria, in the circle of Lower Franconia, situated on the right bank of the Main and not far from Aschaffenburg. Noailles had some sixty thousand men with him, including those *corps d'élite* the Gardes Françaises and the King's Household. The latter formed part of twenty-five thousand men, chiefly cavalry, under the young Duc de Grammont, the nephew of Noailles. This commander likewise possessed the advantage of a splendid service of artillery under the very capable officer la Vallière, who had so ably handled the guns for Belle-Isle in his masterly retreat from Prague. King George had with him some thirty-seven thousand men, consisting of English, Hanoverian, Hessian, and Dutch troops.

At the commencement of the battle everything

was in favour of Noailles, whose batteries la Vallière had placed in an admirable position, while the German King of England had foolishly forced himself into a situation from which it seemed impossible that he could extricate himself. Indeed, had it not been for the folly of the Duc de Grammont, the entire army of the allies must have been slaughtered or forced to surrender.

Noailles held Aschaffenburg with twelve thousand men, which cut off the retreat of the allies, and the defile of Dettingen in front of the allies was occupied by Grammont. The Maréchal adroitly shifted his position on the other side of the Maine, so as with his batteries to take the English King's troops everywhere in flank; they could neither advance nor retire, although George determined upon a futile attempt to do the former.

The battle was, however, lost for Noailles, owing to the jealousy of Grammont and his household troops of the artillery under la Vallière, which seemed in a fair way to win the battle alone. Foolishly charging, contrary to orders, in front of their own guns, the French cavalry masked their fire. The British and Hanoverian infantry stood firm and received them with steady musketry fire and the bayonet. The French advanced guard, without orders, rushed across the morass and rivulet in front of the defile after the cavalry. When these were repulsed, the infantry coming behind them were in the way and prevented any re-formation. King George, with all his troops in a dense body, now followed and drove horse and foot before them in a confused mass, while la Vallière was unable to make any use at all of his excellently placed guns. The Gardes Françaises behaved very badly, while a large number of the French newly raised levies of inexperienced recruits

were absolutely panic-stricken. The advancing allies had simply to slaughter at their leisure as they plunged forward through the disorganised and mixed-up French infantry and cavalry. Meanwhile Noailles, with the greater part of his army held in reserve, was unable to get into touch with the advancing allies, owing to the River Main and the distance which separated him from the victorious troops, who were driving those whom they did not kill into the river to be drowned.

The Maréchal lost six thousand men in this unlucky affair, ruined for him by the worse than folly and indiscipline of his nephew. The losses of the allies were about two thousand. These, however, are the estimates as given by the allies of the losses of either side. The French writers claim that the losses were equal.

The essential point of the result of the conflict was that George, who had driven himself in between Noailles and Broglio, was saved, and able to draw off his troops at leisure, while awaiting an expected Austrian re-inforcement. Whatever may have been the actual losses at Dettingen, the army of Noailles was so shaken that, rather than wait for the junction of the British and Austrians, he retreated and recrossed the Rhine.

The excuse given for this retrograde movement was ridiculous. The French King gave out that his ally the Bavarian Emperor being engaged in trying to come to terms with the Queen of Hungary, he did not wish to spoil the negotiations by the presence of his troops and therefore recalled them. Charles VII. had, however, already been obliged to sign disgraceful terms with Maria Theresa in January of that year 1743.

This pacific declaration only emboldened the Generals of the Austrian forces, while it had a serious effect upon

Sardinia. The Piedmontese King was, by the way, the uncle of Louis XV. and brother-in-law of Philip V. of Spain, whose first wife was a Savoyarde and sister of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, the mother of Louis XV.

Charles Emanuel was found once again on terms of alliance with France and Spain before Dettingen. After that affair, he commenced to realise that the French were altogether too Spanish for him, and he accordingly, in September, 1743, concluded a treaty with Austria. Like his father, Victor Amadeus, he rarely remained for long upon the side of the French-Spanish troops, who were at this time known as the "Gallispans" in Italy. His father even upon one occasion joined the Austrians just after marrying one daughter to the Duc de Bourgogne, the father of Louis XV., and the other to Philip V. Then the secret advices which came to him from his daughter in France were of the greatest assistance to him in fighting against the very French and Spanish army in Italy, of which he had just asked Louis XIV. to make him the Commander-in-Chief against Austria. By their long course of successful trimming these Dukes of Savoy were always in receipt of large subsidies from one country or another, often from two or three at once, of whom one was England. Thus, also, from being merely ducal rulers of Savoy and Piedmont, they became alternately Kings of Sicily and of Sardinia, until, in the fulness of time, they were to be fated to rule over an United Italy from which the last Austrian soldier had been driven. In 1743 their Italian possessions were still nominally held, under the old feudal law, as fiefs of the Holy Roman Empire.

It was a severe blow to Spain when Sardinia "ratted"

once more in 1743. The family union of Versailles and Madrid felt the blow keenly. The Infanta, wife of Don Philip, now sent frequent, tear-stained letters to her father Louis, and he, weeping for sympathy, and finding the Council averse to too serious engagements being entered into with Spain, consulted that Maurepas whom the Duchesse de Châteauroux hated and always called "Little Rascal" (Faquinet).

Maurepas fell in with the afflicted father's views, and copied, while he really dictated, a kind of family compact, which promised to Spain the whole of the Duchy of Milan for Don Philip. While France thus associated herself more closely than ever with the quixotic views of Elizabeth Farnese, she reserved no compensation whatever for herself in her stipulations. It was after this that war was solemnly declared against England. Hitherto the war, so far as George II. was concerned, had merely been one against Hanover.

Maurepas now had to tremble for himself and his ships, for he had to look out for a naval warfare with Great Britain. Besides other posts, he held that of Minister of Marine, and had recently, in that capacity, built a fleet of such rotten timbers that he was afraid to send them to sea.

In the foolish treaty made with Spain a very imprudent clause had been inserted in Maurepas's own hand. This was one which bound France under no circumstances to make peace with England until Gibraltar should be returned to Spain. Thus was it, in his first act of any importance, while "governing by himself," that Louis tied his own hands. Since Gibraltar still flies the British flag, he would have had a long time to wait to make peace if circumstances stronger than the will of the

ambitious Queen of Spain had not forced him to break those foolish bonds!

The duplicity of the King's nature was, however, never more apparent than at this time; for the Duc de Richelieu and Madame de Châteauroux persuaded him to take steps to ally himself once more with that very Protestant Prussia whom Spain and the party of the *honnêtes gens* at Versailles so virulently detested. Still worse! the agent selected for the carrying out of their plans was none else than the freethinking Voltaire. The casuistical excuse of which the King descended to make use in sending Voltaire to Berlin was, that it was in order that the poet and playwright might be able to escape from the persecutions of Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix.

When Fleury was dying, in order to disappoint Cardinal Tencin, he made the King maliciously promise to give the *feuille des bénéfices* to this Boyer. Of this *feuille*, d'Argenson says, "The district of the benefices is a very important ministry. The Court considers it in accordance with the views of intrigue and the personality of whoever may hold it. It distributes rich salaries and eminent offices to the high nobility. Plutus presides and the Holy Ghost is rejected by it. As for the interests of the State, what is required is to make the priesthood agree with the empire; to step in where political power leaves off and where ghostly power begins; to back up the parliaments in suppressing any enterprise that would go too fast or too far." Of Boyer he says, "Every one at once complains of the Bishop of Mirepoix—big and small, clergy and laity. He persecutes for a bagatelle and places the Bull *Unigenitus* far above the Gospel. From step to step he has become the greatest

persecutor of the Jansenists who has yet troubled the Church of God, and he will even surpass the celebrated Jesuit Père le Tellier."

This bigoted fool, of whom elsewhere it is said that he was a perfect nullity, had therefore at his disposal all the rich abbeys and bishoprics, all the enormous funds of the Church. Moreover, he governed the Dauphin, and around them a Court was being formed, in the Court, of pious persons who did not dare to censure the King aloud, but who, with upturned eyes, offered prayers for his reformation. While Louis had read, and laughed over, a satire which Voltaire had written on Boyer, he also very well understood when the Duc de Richelieu pointed out to him this Court opposed to his own, and therefore did not love Boyer any more than he did the Dauphin.

At the same time the Duchesse de Châteauroux was preaching to the King that he should imitate Frederick of Prussia, become really an omnipotent King, and rule according to his own lofty ideas without being controlled by the wishes of any one. Louis accordingly entirely disregarded the inclinations of the *honnêtes gens* when he sent Voltaire to Berlin. There Frederick was delighted to receive him; he well knew that, if not at the Court, the poet had become a power in the land of France. Besides which, the Prussian King was re-establishing an Academy which Leibnitz had started in Berlin in the days of his grandmother.

Nothing, as we know, delighted this warlike King, who was up, dressed, booted, and spurred, and writing his dispatches at four o'clock every morning, more than figuring as the patron of literature and free thought. He readily listened to Voltaire's offers, for he was

still a Frenchman at heart. Moreover, he knew how his uncle, George II., sought to ruin him, and that Maria Theresa hated him like deadly poison. He was well aware of their plottings with Augustus of Saxony and Poland to dismember his kingdom, and to deprive him once more of Silesia. He therefore, like France, wanted an ally. Austria, he thought, was getting too strong, thus he was ready to join Louis and cut in once more against her, before she combined with England and Poland to crush him.

Thus again was the Catholic King of France, who held his Councils in the apartments of the ultramontane priest Tencin, joined to Protestant Prussia; Protestant Sweden, Hesse, and the Palatinate becoming also members of the union. But all that which Louis really desired by this union with the King of Prussia was to make use of him for his own ends. And these were to gain a peace—one which should give him Milan for his beloved and letter-writing daughter, the young Infanta.

He did not, however, know how to go the right way to work. While pretending to listen to Noailles, he had in reality no ears for any one but Cardinal Tencin. And Tencin, who had been assisted in the matter of his Cardinal's hat by the Pretender, had now only one idea in his head. This was the restoration of the Catholic Pretender—the Stuart in Great Britain. Louis—blockhead as he was—listened to Tencin's plan, and liked it. He had not sufficient sense to see how unpopular the pursuit of such a scheme must make him with those very Protestant allies who had once more just stretched out to him the hand of friendship from Germany.

CHAPTER XVII

The Disgrace of the Favourites

1744

THE plan of Louis being the plan of Tencin, the King did not waste much time in having a large army collected, under Comte Maurice de Saxe, for a descent into England, while every kind of ship and boat capable of crossing the Channel was collected along the northern shores of France. At the same time the French King developed a wonderful idea in his brain. His idea was to give George II. and Maria Theresa no cause for anger, and in order to accomplish this, Louis proposed to leave George's Hanoverian dominions alone, and only to attack the Queen of Hungary in her outlying possessions in the Low Countries. The extra advantage to be gained from this plan for Louis personally was that he would be able to figure in the light of a conqueror. While George, seeing the preparations for a descent upon England, got ready all his warships and withdrew his forces from Flanders to Great Britain, Louis, in imitation of his great-grandfather, prepared to head a Royal army and make a Royal progress through Flanders.

The Protestant allies of the Rhine were not long in displaying the resentment which they felt when they learned this plan for the restoration of the Catholic

Stuarts. The Hessians, indeed, rather than help France, were anxious to go in person to help the inhabitants of Great Britain, their co-religionists.

That the Royal farce which commenced to be enacted in Flanders in May, 1744, might in nothing lack its resemblance to the previous one of Louis XIV. in 1667, like his great-grandsire, Louis XV. was soon followed to the seat of war by his two mistresses, Madame de Châteauroux and her sister Madame de Lauraguais.

Louis XIV., seventy years earlier, had been accompanied by Louise de la Vallière, Madame de Montespan, and his Queen Marie Thérèse, who often travelled along together in one golden coach, when they were secretly laughed at by the army, who called them *les trois reines*. The Grand Monarque himself then frequently made a fourth in the gilded chariot at such times as he was not engaged in the bombardment of city after city.

His great-grandson, however, had given orders that Marie Lesczynska was not to follow him to the seat of war. Maurepas, however, was responsible for the instructions which had been given to the raging Duchesse de Châteauroux to remain behind at Versailles—instructions which she soon disregarded. She well knew when she flew on the footsteps of her Royal lover that she would meet with a warm welcome and forgiveness from the King, even if the people of France and the army did not display the same satisfaction at her manœuvres.

The capital and the provinces had indeed already commenced an outcry against the new favourite, whom they reproached, above all else, with her shameful conduct in hunting out into the direst poverty her sister, de Mailly, whose good heart and harmlessness were

universally recognised. The people loudly complained of the incestuous orgies of the King with the two new sisters at Choisy, where he dragged the Royal dignity in the dirt. Never, indeed, was he more unpopular than when he started, with an enormous army, for his career of conquest in Flanders, while public opinion warmly applauded the tactics of Maurepas, in accordance with which Louis had left the reigning favourite, with that subsidiary mistress her sister, behind him.

Madame de Châteauroux, however, who had, in her projects to glorify the King, warmly encouraged his warlike inclinations, was above all anxious to give herself the reputation of sharing in the glory which she designed for Louis. She hoped, when the nation saw that she was associated in the measures which withdrew the Monarch from his accustomed indolence, that she would be forgiven and taken into public esteem and affection. Closely allied with the Comte d'Argenson against Maurepas, and strongly backed up by the Duc de Richelieu, she imagined at first that her influence was too strong not to be called by the King to accompany him to the tented field of honour. Maurepas, however, very wisely persuaded Louis that, if he wished to preserve the affection and esteem of his subjects, he must upon proceeding to the war endure the sacrifice of leaving all petticoat influences behind him.

Madame de Châteauroux, before the King's departure, enjoyed a petty vengeance. She contrived to have Maurepas sent off upon a tour of inspection of the maritime ports, and thus to remove her enemy from the Royal presence. He was obliged to go at first to Provence. Having accomplished this, by Richelieu's advice she pretended to submit to the King's will, that

wily courtier, who was his Majesty's chief aide-de-camp, promising her that he would soon dispose Louis to cause her to follow him to the army. Knowing his master thoroughly, and that he had nothing whatever of the warrior in his nature, Richelieu was quite convinced that he would very soon be lost if unable to pursue his favourite diversions and enjoy his little suppers in feminine society.

The Queen, meanwhile, learning that the favourite Minister and the mistress were both to be separated from her husband, made efforts towards a reconciliation with him, their terms latterly, owing to his shameful conduct, having become more than ever formal. So badly had Louis treated his spouse that frequently, when she attended his *petit lever* in the morning, he had even been wanting in the courtesy of telling the Queen to be seated, but left her standing in his presence. Feeling herself thus downtrodden, the natural timidity of the Polish Princess had been more than ever increased. She had become almost afraid to ask anything of the King verbally; when she had anything particular to say to him, she usually sent it to Louis in a letter.

On April 16th, 1744, going to see him as usual, the Queen personally delivered a letter into his hand. It contained the expression of her wishes that, under such conditions as Louis might think fit to approve, she might be permitted to follow him to the war. In this letter the Queen humbly said that she dared not ask for a reply.

A few days later this brute of a King took an opportunity of openly outraging the wife who had thus shown her devotion. The Queen, conquering her timidity,

went to him at his *petit lever* and asked for the post of *dame du palais* to the Dauphine for a daughter of the Marquis de Tessé. Louis did not even deign to reply, and the next day the Queen learned from Madame de Talleyrand that he had appointed another lady, Madame de Périgord.

A few nights later the King left for the army without even informing Marie Lesczynska that he was leaving, although he passed a part of the evening in her society. He sent his two mistresses to stay with Pâris-Duverney, and, taking with him a Jesuit confessor, Père Pérusseau, to be at hand in case of necessity, departed in company with the Duc d'Ayen, who afterwards became Maréchal de Noailles like his father. For the Queen he left behind four lines, saying that it *would cost too much* to take her with him to the frontier.

Upon arrival at Valenciennes the King, who talked in this manner to his wife about expense, commenced by giving a magnificent supper to twenty-five Princes and general officers; while the Queen, left behind, tried to cut down her expenses closer than ever.

To his two mistresses the King now sent daily messengers with letters; but Richelieu, seeing the credit of the Maréchal de Noailles and the Duc d'Ayen daily increasing, became fearful that his own credit might fall. Accordingly he wrote off to the Duchesse de Châteauroux and the Duchesse de Lauraguais to come at once. At the same time he wrote to a Princesse of the Blood who had formerly been his mistress and several other grand ladies to accompany them to Lille, and thus cover their departure with their presence and countenance. This Princesse was the Duchess of Modena, who had been Mademoiselle de Valois, the daughter of

the Regent, and she was quite ready to do the bidding of the man with whom she had twenty years previously been openly compromised, both before and after her marriage.

Another Princesse who was not ashamed to follow in the train of Madame de Châteauroux was the Princesse de Conti. Her young daughter, who finally had been the wife selected for the young Duc de Chartres, also elected to accompany her mother to the seat of war, where her husband was already. Other ladies included Madame de Bellefonds and her daughter.

It is not to be supposed that all these grand dames could depart without the Queen being aware of the proceeding. Indeed, Châteauroux and Lauraguais thought fit to take their adieux of Her Majesty, when she received them with such kindness that the former was ashamed and overcome—although not so was her sister.

The Duchess of Modena also thought fit to attend upon the Queen and ask if she had any orders to give her before her departure to Lille; whereupon Marie Lesczynska replied acidly, "Make your idiotic journey as you like; it does not concern me in any way."

The departure from Paris was made after nightfall, in order to avoid the jeers of the people, and relays of horses having been provided in advance, the journey was easily accomplished. In the capital, however, the murmurings were loud, while the people went so far as to name the two mistresses and the three Princesses of the Blood who accompanied them by the lowering and disgraceful name of *les coureuses*.

The arrival of this group of women at the army headquarters excited the greatest scorn and annoyance

among the soldiery. The Swiss in particular, to express their derision, sang in chorus a vulgar and well-known song so that it could be heard in the Royal tents. Soon all the army took up the refrain of this ballad, which, commencing with the lines—

Ah! Madame Enroux,
Je deviendrai fou,

could be heard menacingly sung wherever the King might happen to be. For Madame Enroux had, however, been substituted the words "Belle Châteauroux."

The King meanwhile had taken Courtrai, Menin, and Ypres, but before proceeding to the reduction of Furnes in turn, he found that the position in the army with the sisters present had become impossible. He, the Duc de Richelieu, and the mistresses became frightened; Louis therefore conducted his favourites to Lille, and sent them thence to Dunkirk for security. Here they were much disconcerted to find their uncle and enemy Maurepas, who, having finished his tour of inspection of the southern ports, was now in turn visiting those in the north of the kingdom. As might have been expected, they found themselves obliged to listen to many pleasant little witticisms from his biting tongue upon the subject of the agreeable visit to the army which they had so much enjoyed.

While the King had thus been having "a walk-over" in Flanders, things had been going badly on the Rhine, which had been very indifferently watched by the Maréchal de Coigny. Broglio had been disgraced since his retreat from Bavaria, and old Coigny with old Noailles now between them shared the important posts of honour which Frederick had urgently demanded for Belle-Isle.

Noailles was commanding on the Lower Rhine, but to Belle-Isle had been merely allotted the duties of preparing the stores for the army at Metz.

Meanwhile the Austrians, under Prince Charles of Lorraine, had invaded Alsace and were expected in Lorraine also, which was left unprotected. King Stanislas Lesczynski was in such imminent danger that he fled from his capital, Lunéville; but Frederick, believing that there was nothing to fear if his advice was followed, wrote a friendly letter to Louis in July. In this he said that he was about to prove his friendship—would start on August 13th and arrive before Prague, in Bohemia, the 30th of the month. He hopes that the King will not leave him alone under such serious circumstances, in which he is partly acting on behalf of France. There are, he says, three blows to be delivered—in Bavaria, Bohemia, and Hanover. Belle-Isle, the man who enjoys the confidence of all Germany, should be given the supreme command. A man of dash and decision, such as Comte Maurice de Saxe, should lead the expedition against Hanover. But it was necessary to act instantly, above all, to give up defensive operations and assume a vigorous offensive which would ensure success. The offensive, Frederick continued, was the secret of the successes of le Grand Condé, of Turenne, of Luxembourg, and of the Maréchal de Catinat under Louis XIV., who between them had given so much glory to France. It would have been imagined that Louis XV., so anxious at this time to emulate the glories of his great-grandfather, would have listened to Frederick. But not at all!—not even in that which concerned Maurice de Saxe did he pay any attention to the counsels of the Prussian King. This natural son of Augustus II. he left in a post

of no immediate importance, merely with the charge of guarding the northern coasts.

The two fat and gouty old Maréchals, Coigny and Noailles, were left at the seat of action, with forces immeasurably greater than those of the Austrian. Unfortunately, they would not act, but remained discussing the point whether, if the enemy retired, they should follow him or no. Not a blow was struck to assist Frederick, when it would have been easy by a few rapid marches to have crushed the enemy in Alsace, for ever to have prevented one of the Austrians from again crossing the Rhine, to rejoin the other armies of Maria Theresa against whom Frederick was about to hurl himself.

While the Maréchals were thus doing nothing, a message arrived from the King: he would come and command in person! the object of his offensive would be to attack the city of Fribourg just across the frontier. It was pitiable in the extreme!

Louis had now gone to Dunkirk to join his mistresses, where their ears could no longer be assailed by the vulgar songs of the army of Flanders. He determined to travel across France to Metz, and to take the two sisters with him. During this journey all decency was abandoned; wherever the King stayed the two women were lodged with him. Nor was the Jesuit confessor Pérusseau forgotten; he was required in case of illness or death, although the King now no longer even said his prayers. Since he could not deprive himself again of his witty-tongued Minister, it was settled that the favourite's uncle Maurepas was also to accompany the King. In spite of the insults she had received, not for worlds would Châteauroux therefore allow Louis to depart

without her while this doubtful personage was at hand, especially as another enemy was also to follow the King in the shape of his Almoner, Fitz-James, the rugged Bishop of Soissons.

During the journey in the heats of July, Madame de Châteauroux delayed the King by falling ill at Reims. Here she declared that the medicine given to her was poisoned by her enemy Maurepas. Louis immediately talked to her as though she were a dying woman, and entertained the invalid with cheerful discussions as to the place where she should be buried, and the design of her tombstone. Then he went on ahead, leaving the two sisters to follow him to Metz, if the Duchesse should recover, which she did shortly.

At Metz the greatest scandal was created by the manner in which the sisters were lodged in the Abbey of Saint-Arnould. When a long wooden gallery was made for them to communicate with the King's apartments, there was an outcry. This gallery blocked four streets, and it was in vain that it was given out that the Prior had built it in order that the King might traverse its length when going to the Mass. The real intention of the gallery was far too evident to the meanest intellect for such an absurd story to be believed.

On August 3rd, 1744, the King was taken ill at Metz, after a supper at which he had indulged too freely in wine. His illness developed into what was called a putrid fever. The two sisters established themselves by his bedside, and refused to admit any but persons favourable to themselves, such as the Duc de Richelieu, the servants and the aides-de-camp, and the Maréchal Marquis de Meuse, a worthless pandar beloved of the

King. The Princes of the Blood and the grand officers of the Crown—the Ducs de Bouillon, de la Rochefoucauld, de Villeroi—with the Bishop of Soissons and Père Pérusseau, now all found themselves barred out from the Royal presence, and a great tussle began between all these personages and the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

All of this party had, however, fully determined to gain access to the Monarch at such a favourable opportunity, and, by working upon his religious scruples, to bring about the downfall at the same time of the Duchesse de Châteauroux and of the Duc de Richelieu. Nothing but bickerings and quarrellings were to be heard between the two parties for many days, but, for a time, Châteauroux held the fort against all comers.

The priests and the Princes intended, nevertheless, that the King should be confessed, and compelled, as the price of his absolution, to send the two mistresses away in disgrace. At length his condition became so low that the favourites found themselves compelled to treat with Father Pérusseau, and endeavour to come to terms with him and the very severe Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons, who would, in his quality of Almoner, administer the Sacraments after the confession of the King. They had already allowed the grand officers to enter the King's apartments during celebration of the Mass, but ejected them at the conclusion of the service, when they retained Pérusseau, taking the Jesuit into a little cabinet close to the King's bed.

Here Châteauroux demanded of the priest if she would be obliged to go away in case the King should desire confession and the other Sacraments. He, however, became confused, and could not give any direct answer, when the favourite said impatiently, "Come,

make up your mind. Do not allow me to be sent away openly and scandalously; the King's reputation will be less compromised if I leave in secret."

Pérusseau did not wish to outrage the Duchesse if the King lived, nor did he wish to lose his place in case the King died and the Dauphin succeeded him. He tried, therefore, to temporise: "But, Madame, perhaps the King will not be confessed!"

"Yes, he will be," replied Châteauroux, "if only to set a good example. I myself shall urge him to it. But what is required is to avoid a scandal. Shall I be sent away? Reply!"

The confessor, more embarrassed than ever, stammered that he did not know the King's life; it depended upon what avowals he might make.

"So far as that goes," replied the Duchesse, "I will myself confess to you that I have sinned with the King as much as possible. But is that a reason to make the dying Louis XV. send me away? Is there no exception for a King?"

Here Pérusseau, in his embarrassment, endeavoured to make his escape; but the Duc de Richelieu, from whose own account of the affair we are quoting, blocked the doorway, and said, "Come, Father Pérusseau, be gallant to the ladies; accord to them that there shall be no scandal. Your ifs and your buts drive us to despair."

The Jesuit maintaining silence, Richelieu embraced him, asking good-humouredly if he would not do for his sake, who had always been a good friend to the Jesuits, that which the fathers of the Church had always permitted to the confessors of Kings under similar circumstances.

But Pérusseau remained mute, fearing both the Duc and the Duchesse should the King recover, but with his mind made up what to do if the King seemed dying. Thereupon Madame de Châteauroux, who was in despair, tried the effects of her charms upon the priest. Taking the Jesuit's chin between her pretty hands, with tears in her eyes, she implored him to avoid a scandal, vowing that if he would do so she would never again be anything but a friend to the King. The wily priest, however, contrived in the end to escape without binding himself by any definite promises.

Meanwhile all the King's Ministers stood by watching, without interfering in the quarrel between the two parties. They, like Pérusseau, did not wish to commit themselves, knowing that if the King died the devout party of the Dauphin and the Queen would be paramount, whereas if he should live, then Richelieu and Madame de Châteauroux would definitely triumph over the Princes and the great officers of the Crown. Maurepas only did not hide that he was for the Princes and the priests.

Eventually the Comte de Clermont, a Condé and Prince of the Blood, brother of the late Duc de Bourbon, forced his way in to the King's bedside, and told his Royal cousin that, from love for him, the Princes desired to be allowed the satisfaction of learning from his own lips how he felt. Having said so much, this Prince became alarmed and wished to retreat; the King, however, retained him awhile and showed that he was not offended.

When next the Mass was celebrated, Fitz-James, the King's Almoner, took the opportunity to urge the King to confess.

"It is not yet time," replied Louis; "besides which, my head aches too much."

Fitz-James had to retire discomfited; but when he had gone out, and the Duchesse, taking his hand, endeavoured to fondle the King, and embrace him, he repulsed her, saying, "I fear that I do ill, in the condition that I am in, to allow you these caresses; we may perhaps be forced to separate."

"Oh, very well!" replied the favourite testily, and dropped the King's hand.

Eventually Peyronie, the surgeon, informed the Duc de Bouillon, who was Grand Chamberlain, that the King had but two days to live. Bouillon, in spite of Richelieu, contrived to send a message to the King, whereupon Louis in reply sent for the Princes and great officers of the Court, who entered triumphant. The King was not, however, very gracious to them, as he understood from Bouillon that that which they chiefly desired was to be able to fulfil the duties of their respective charges during the grand function of the administration of the Sacraments.

"It is not yet time for that," said the King, especially as the Duc de Richelieu, feeling his pulse like a doctor, assured him that he was really not very ill.

At length, after a fit of unconsciousness, the King cried out for Bouillon and Père Pérusseau, saying that he was dying—they must come at once. Pérusseau having confessed him, Louis said to the Duc de Bouillon, "You can fulfil your duties. I have sacrificed my favourites, male and female, in the name of religion, and as the very Christian King, eldest son of the Church."

The victorious Bishop of Soissons entered at once and, in a furious manner, said to the mistresses, "Mes-

dames, retire at once—the King orders you." And he gave instant orders for the wooden gallery by which the ladies were able to approach the King to be knocked down, so that the people might learn the tidings of the separation.

Richelieu, however, stood firm. In the name of the King, he counselled the favourites to remain, saying that he took the consequences upon himself. The furious prelate thereupon sent orders for all the churches in Metz to be closed until the mistresses had obeyed the King's order for them to leave his presence. The two sisters then left in tears, with downcast heads, not looking at any one.

Fitz-James then, in violently chosen words, refused the Sacraments to the King so long as "la Concubine" remained in the town. He added, "Your Majesty will soon die. I beg you to give orders for their instant departure." Louis was frightened; in his weak state the words la Concubine shouted out by the Bishop alarmed him—he agreed to all that his Almoner required of him.

The news was instantly promulgated by the party of the Princes, who stirred up all the people of Metz against the sisters. Even their former ally the Comte d'Argenson treated them with scorn. Nor could they obtain a carriage from the Royal stables in which to leave the town.

The Maréchal de Belle-Isle, however, came to their assistance; he was not ungenerous or ungrateful, and remembered former services rendered to him by their sister Madame de Mailly. Afraid lest they should be stoned, he gave his own commodious coach to the disgraced women and sent them, in company with three other great ladies who had followed them, to a country-

house several leagues from Metz, the proprietors of which Belle-Isle with some trouble persuaded to receive Madame de Châteauroux and Madame de Lauraguais.

While they reached this asylum in safety, owing to the window-blinds of Belle-Isle's coach being drawn down, Fitz-James prepared, figuratively speaking, to dance upon the helpless body of Louis XV. now that, at last, he had got him prostrate and in his power. Louis, believing his last moment at hand, allowed himself to be danced upon; nobody could have been more abjectly humble than the King, who, in the presence of all the overpowering paraphernalia of the Church displayed by the Bishop, was completely overcome. He made no objection when, in his name, Fitz-James expressed his contrition to all the courtiers, and vowed that, so long as he lived, never again should the sisters be allowed within a hundred and fifty miles of Versailles; moreover, that their charges about the Court should be taken from them. When the Sacrament was to be administered to him, so great was his fear of the devil that Louis said to the Bishop, "Monsieur, make the administration a real good one; it is twenty-two years since I had my first communion."

One sensible and penitent remark the King made, which was that if he dared to ask anything of God, it would be that he might give to the kingdom a better ruler than himself.

In this manner did the Princes, priests, and great officers of the Crown gain the battle, while the party of Richelieu melted away, and those who had pinned themselves to the fortunes of the Duchesse de Châteauroux hastened to separate and hide, for fear that a *lettre de cachet* might lodge them in the Bastille. The

Duc de Richelieu alone valiantly held up his head to the storm, openly declaring that if only the King could get rid of those who had forced themselves upon him, the two sisters would be brought back again in triumph. Hereupon Fitz-James and his party contrived to get an order from the King that Richelieu should leave the kingdom and retire to Bâle, in Switzerland.

A day or two later the King was completely given up by the physicians, and seemed at the last gasp. A quack, however, contrived to gain access to the deserted Monarch, and by administering a tremendous emetic soon put him in the fair way to recovery.

CHAPTER XVIII

Vengeance and Death of Madame de Châteauroux

1744

WHILE the King was gradually returning to health, the Queen arrived at Metz, when Louis, touched by her kindness, for once in his life seems to have had a spice of manhood about him. He acknowledged his past faults, and asked the forgiveness of the loving woman who clung about his worthless neck in tears.

The Dauphin had also expressed a wish to visit his sick father, but Louis sent word to the Duc de Châtillon, his son's Governor, at Chalons, that for the present he was not to approach any closer than Verdun. In spite of this order, Châtillon came on with his Royal charge and took up for his lodging the apartments recently vacated by the two favourites. The Dauphin was not very well, and Belle-Isle and others tried to persuade Châtillon not to take him to the King. The physicians joined in protesting, saying that the King's fever was infectious, and that the heir to the Crown should not be subjected to the risk of catching it.

In spite of these protestations, the Duc took the Dauphin to his father, who received his son frigidly. When Châtillon commenced to make excuses for having disobeyed the Royal command, Louis did not answer.

He was furious, and determined from that minute signally to disgrace the Duc de Châtillon at an early date.

During the King's illness the Maréchals de Coigny and Noailles had, in spite of their superior forces, allowed the Austrians to escape unmolested, to go and reinforce the troops acting against the King of Prussia. Louis, however, upon his recovery joined the army which already had invested Fribourg. He reached the camp in front of that city on October 10th, 1744, but he had not waited so long before resuming his former brutal indifference to Marie Lesczynska, who went off, or rather had been sent off, some time previously to visit her father at Lunéville.

The King also passed through Lunéville to visit King Stanislas and his Queen, and behaved most rudely. We are told that already was his mind taken up once more so much with the Duchesse de Châteauroux that he forgot even to say good-bye on leaving to the King and Queen of Poland, or to his own wife, their daughter. Upon his journey to join the army he suddenly recollected that he had been wanting in politeness, whereupon he sent back a courier to inquire for the health of the Queen of Poland. A little farther on Louis suddenly remembered his father-in-law and his wife also, for whom he had given the courier no messages. To repair this omission the forgetful King sent a flattering letter to each to apologise for his remissness.

On November 1st the King had the satisfaction of seeing Fribourg yield to his army. He signed the articles of capitulation, and, having by this time become tired of war and bored with Germany, determined to return to Paris.

Here a triumph awaited him; the people, who had

hated their King upon his departure for Flanders, were ready to fête him for a double reason—on account of his recovery, and as the saviour of the kingdom, which had been invaded when he proceeded to Metz from Dunkirk.

The real reason of the joy of the people was that before the King went to the army France had suffered nothing but defeats and humiliations at the hand of Austria. After his arrival the campaign in Flanders had been a triumph, while upon his arrival at Metz the Austrians had, at all events, retired from Gallic soil, after which Louis himself had taken Fribourg. In addition, since all the events which had occurred at Metz had become known, the people of France were delighted with their King because he had sent away the two unpopular mistresses and been openly reconciled with the Queen.

Now it was that the inhabitants of the capital bestowed upon the returning conqueror the title of *le Bien-Aimé*—the Well-Beloved. Never did a Roman Emperor, returning from some mighty conquest, receive a more rapturous greeting than that accorded to le Bien-Aimé.

The Well-Beloved, lolling back upon the cushions of the golden coach in which he made his entry, was dreaming of a new conquest, or rather re-conquest—that of the haughty Duchesse de Châteauroux, who, in disguise, was, had he but known it, watching him in the crowd.

Her disguise did not, however, prevent her from being recognised just after the King had passed her. The unfortunate lady wrote to the Duc de Richelieu that one man in the crowd called her by a most offensive

name, while another spat upon her nose! She was glad to escape without being torn to pieces by the mob, who were frantically applauding the King whom she had stirred up to perform the kingly deeds for which he was receiving the plaudits of his people.

Long before his return to Paris, Louis had commenced to look with hatred upon all those who in any way reminded him of the humiliating part that he had been compelled to play during his illness. The Duc de Richelieu, the Marquis de Meuse, and the old party of the favourites were now once more high in the King's good graces; while he was furious with the priests, the Princes, and the Ducs de Bouillon and de la Rochefoucauld, who had taken advantage of his weakness to compel him, while humbling himself, to send his mistresses away.

Especially was he enraged with the Duc de Châtillon and his wife, owing to tidings that had come to him from Spain that the Queen and Royal Family at Madrid were openly rejoicing at the disgrace of Châteauroux, full particulars of which had been communicated to Elizabeth Farnese by some person unknown.

The King having upbraided the Spanish Ambassador with being the culprit, Montijo warmly disclaimed having sent any report on the matter, and sent off at once to Spain to find out the facts. He and Vauréal, the French Ambassador, between them contrived to make the Queen of Spain confess the truth—namely, that the Duchesse de Châtillon had written everything to her, while violently abusing and sneering at the disgraced mistress. Although Louis had already written and signed the *lettre de cachet* exiling the Dauphin's Governor, he was waiting to make a present of his

disgrace to Châteauroux until his return; as he was anxious to do anything in his power to appease the woman whose anger he feared and from whom he was by no means assured that he would meet with a favourable reception. For he well knew the proud spirit of the young Duchesse de Châteauroux. Considering herself the daughter of the Condé, she asserted herself as of the Blood Royal, and was not likely to yield once more to the King without exacting vengeance upon her enemies.

On the night of November 14th, 1744, the Queen having foolishly told her ladies not to open at once when the King scratched upon the door of her apartment, Louis left the Tuileries at once in high dudgeon, and proceeded incognito to the house of Madame de Châteauroux, in the Rue du Bac.

Taken entirely by surprise, and extremely agitated, that lady declared to the King at first that it would cause "too many heads to fall" if she should accede to his request and return to the Court. It was in vain that the King endeavoured to induce his former favourite to return with him that very night to Versailles. He did not, however, wish to cut off any heads.

The haughty beauty then demanded from him the exile of Maurepas and his wife, of Châtillon, who stirred the Dauphin up against her, of the Duc de Bouillon, de la Rochefoucauld, Père Pérusseau, Balleroy, formerly Governor of the Duc de Chartres, and of Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons. Louis replied that he would give her all these, and Madame de Châtillon also, only excepting the Comte de Maurepas, for him he could not get on without, he made the work of the State so easy. He willingly agreed, however, to humiliate Maurepas in any other way she chose.

It was decided between them, at length, that Maurepas was to be forced to undergo a cruel mortification. This was, to be made personally the bearer of a letter of humble excuses from the King to the Duchesse, which letter should also demand her to return to the Court and there resume the charge of which she had been deprived. Her sister de Lauraguais was to return to the Court also.

This having been decided, the favourite melted towards the King and he passed the night in the Rue du Bac. The agitations of that night were, however, too much for Madame de Châteauroux, especially after all the disgrace and suffering that she had undergone already. The next day she had a violent headache, which soon developed into a high fever. All of her vengeances were, however, carried out except that of Pérusseau, which, from a spirit of facetiousness, Louis varied, by keeping the priest for a long time upon tenterhooks as to whether he should be exiled or no. The King in the meantime caused him personally to present at the Court, to himself, the Queen, Dauphin, and Dauphine, the priest whom he was given to understand was going to replace him in the post of confessor to His Majesty. Out of revenge for the way in which Pérusseau had left the handsome favourite in uncertainty as to her approaching fate at Metz, the King kept up this farce with Pérusseau for a long time after the death of Madame de Châteauroux, but finally pardoned him. For that unhappy woman died a month later as the result of her fever, although not until she had had the satisfaction of humiliating Phélippeaux de Maurepas, and seeing her other enemies sent off into exile. When her old enemy, and uncle, brought her the King's letter



From an engraving after the painting by Nattier.

MADAME DE CHÂTEAUROUX.

of apology and, moreover, sought with a polite grace to kiss her hand, she merely snapped at him the words "Be off with you!" as though he were a dog.

During her illness the sick woman frequently declared that she was still suffering from the effects of the poison which Maurepas had caused to be put into her medicine at Reims; she also accused the now humble Minister of having poisoned the King's letter before handing it to her; and by many the former charge was considered to be true. The youthful Marquise de la Tournelle had already enjoyed the satisfaction of humbling her aunt upon the occasion of her first presentation at Court in her rank of Duchesse. Then, while she and several other *grandes dames* had, as peeresses, been accorded the "tabouret" and permitted to sit in the Royal presence, Madame de Maurepas was forced to attend the ceremony and stand in the presence of the niece whom she had so cruelly ejected from her house. A truly sweet revenge!

Of Madame de Châteauroux's other enemies, the Duc and Duchesse de Châtillon were for ever banished; the Duc de Bouillon was exiled to an old castle at Albret, in Navarre, which had not been lived in for two hundred years; the Duc de la Rochefoucauld was sent to Rocheguyon, with strict orders that he was only allowed to go from Rocheguyon to Liancourt and from Liancourt to Rocheguyon. Fitz-James, that illegal offshoot of the Stuart race, was exiled to his diocese of Soissons, but the King's vengeance did not end there. Although the Pretender had promised to obtain his illegitimate relative the Cardinal's hat, the King exercised the right, which he enjoyed in common with the rulers of Spain and Austria, by which they could refuse to

allow their subjects to accept the dignity of the Cardinalate. For the rest of his life Fitz-James was compelled to remain a mere Bishop. He took his revenge by writing to the King occasionally, to remind him that he would die some day, and by saying that in the meantime "his greatest pleasure was to remember that once His Majesty had shown signs of repentance and humility." Balleroy, whose crime had been that he had composed the fulminations pronounced at Metz by Fitz-James, and also had stirred up the Duc de Chartres to show his resentment with the other Princes, was not forgotten: he was exiled to Normandy for life.

In this manner did Marie Anne, the most important and over-bearing of the four Nesle favourites, have her revenge—one indeed which lasted long after she was gone. During her illness the King became once more sufficiently religious to offer up prayers himself and to send money to all the churches of Versailles to obtain Masses for his mistress; but the bought Masses, like his own prayers, proved unavailing. She was before dying reconciled to her sister de Mailly, and also, in a touching scene, to Madame de Flavacourt, with whom she had not been on good terms. She was waited upon by that daughter of the Regent the Duchess of Modena, and attended by the Jesuit Father Ségaud, who expressed himself as being most edified by her exemplary sentiments; and just before she died the Sacraments were taken to her by Languet, the Curé of Saint-Sulpice. Thus, in every manner, were the circumstances attending her end far less cruel and tragic than had been those in connection with the death of her elder sister, Madame de Vintimille. Madame de Châteauroux, widow of Jean Louis Marquis de la Tournelle, Lieutenant-Colonel of the infantry regiment

of Condé, a Duchesse and peeress of France by letters patent of 1743, was interred in the chapel of Saint Michel at Saint-Sulpice upon December 10th, 1744.

With her death, so far as is known, ceased the connection of Louis XV. with the Nesle family. For the memoir writers of the time make no further mention of his liaison with the Duchesse de Lauraguais; while, in spite of his advances, Madame de Flavacourt, the greatest beauty of the family, persisted in refusing to allow the name of a fifth sister to be united by the tongue of scandal with that of Louis XV. She remarked grandiloquently to Richelieu, who came to make her brilliant offers from the King, "If that is all, I prefer the esteem of my contemporaries!"

It affords a strange picture of the times when we read that the Duchesses of Modena, Boufflers, and Bellefonds retired to Trianon to weep with the King; that the Dauphin, the Prince de Conti, the Royal Ducs de Chartres and Penthièvre came there to share their sorrow; and that the Queen herself wrote and asked permission to be allowed to come and mingle her tears with his own. While that Royal Prince the Duc de Chartres obtained as a favour—*as a relation of the dead woman!*—permission to wear mourning for her, the Queen received, as usual, a sharp and brutal reply to her offered sympathy—Louis wrote a curt letter which was a strict order to her to keep away.

CHAPTER XIX

The Battle of Fontenoy

1745

WHILE the Duchesse de Châteauroux was dying in Paris, things were going badly with Frederick the Great, and this young warrior, at the age of thirty-two, came near to meeting with an untimely end.

Upon again taking up arms as the ally of France, he marched into Bohemia with a hundred thousand men, and took Prague. Although he had sent a messenger to urge Coigny and Noailles to perform the French part in the contract and attack the Austrians on the Rhine, those two dotards, as we know, let them go to join the myriads of light troops, Pandours of Trenk and Hussars of Mentzel, who were already unceasingly harassing the Prussian.

Daily he was seeing some of his magazines of stores, his supplies of food, cut off and captured, when the second Austrian army arrived from the Rhine and he found himself overwhelmed by a sea of enemies. Then it was that the Prussian army, sorely tried, showed that wonderful condition of discipline and valour with which they had been already inspired by their young and heroic commander. While retreating slowly, Frederick displayed most remarkable firmness. Repeatedly halt-

ing in well-chosen positions, he showed a bold front. On October 24th he offered battle in form, but the enemy preferred to decline the contest, while trying to wear out and starve out the retreating forces, and constantly watching for an opportunity to fall upon some part of Frederick's army when separated from the main forces.

His garrison left in Prague was meanwhile reduced to the same condition as the French had been in 1742. Their retreat, which commenced in the bitter winter weather at the end of November, also resembled in its awful hardships the cruel retreat of Belle-Isle to Egra in the December of that year; half of the force was frozen.

At one moment the Prussian King came very near to being killed or captured. He had, with his Guards and Head-quarter Staff, entered Kolin. There was considerable confusion accompanying the entry into the place, when the barbaric hordes without charged the advanced guard of the Prussian army, rolled them up, and charged into the streets of the city. Had this attack been well pushed home, Frederick must have fallen or have suffered the ignoble fate of being taken alive to his implacable enemy Maria Theresa.

Cursing the bad faith of his French allies, Frederick contrived to right matters, and, during his continued retreat, to keep his army together in the face of the numberless swarms of the pursuers. At length, by good generalship, he managed to arrive in Silesia with all his corps united. There he turned upon the foe like a lion at bay, and, at the point of the bayonet, drove back the Austrian masses before him like chaff before the wind. They, in their turn, were now

compelled to sleep without shelter for five nights upon the frozen snow, whence many never rose again.

Louis XV., after the death of the high-born favourite whom, as the supposed daughter of M. le Duc de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, he had always dignified by addressing as "Princesse," had not for long contented himself with his parties of pleasure at his château at Choisy with the Court ladies whom he invited without their husbands. By the beginning of April he was already suited with a new official mistress—a low-born one this time, who from childhood had marked out the King for her prey, and who, by her various accomplishments, talents, and ambitions, was fated to make some noise in the world during the ensuing twenty years. The Duchesse de Châteauroux had already been so jealous of this lady, in anticipation, that once, when the Duchesse de Chevreuse praised her looks to the King, she took a signal revenge. Moving over to where Madame de Chevreuse was sitting, she carefully selected the foot upon which she knew that lady suffered with a bad corn. With her own high heel Madame de Châteauroux stamped so viciously upon that corn that she crushed corn and toe together. Madame de Chevreuse, fainting with the agony thus caused, had to be carried off to her bed. Warned by the example made of her, the other Court ladies were careful to make no further mention to the King of she who was then merely known as "la petite d'Étioles"—concerning whom more later.

In the beginning of May, 1745, Louis had a fancy to go off once more and see what was taking place at the seat of war in Flanders. There the army was now commanded by the half-Saxon, half-Polish, and Protestant

Comte Maurice de Saxe, whom the King had created a Maréchal de France. He had with him another distinguished foreign officer, a friend of his own named Lowenthal, or Lowendhal, upon whom he could rely. Saxe was, however, greatly hampered by the jealousies, almost amounting to insubordination, of the French Generals under him. The presence of the King seemed necessary to produce any sort of union in the army.

Before his arrival the forces were very largely strengthened at the expense of the army of the Rhine. When Louis arrived at the camp before Tournai, in Austrian Flanders, which is now a frontier town of Belgium, in the province of Hainault, there were little short of eighty thousand men with the army.

Tournai was being besieged, but the allies, under the Duke of Cumberland, son of George II., were approaching to relieve the place. These consisted of the British, Dutch, and Hanoverians, with some Austrians, about fifty-five thousand men in all. The Austrians were under the wise old General Kœnigseck.

On May 9th Louis learned that these were about to attack near Fontenoy, some five miles south-east of Tournai, where Saxe had given orders for his army to take up a strong position on rising ground. This commander was himself suffering severely at this time from dropsy, brought on by his excesses, and he therefore had to rely considerably upon his subordinates.

The allies attacked on May 10th, drove in the French outposts, and halted for the night under arms. Saxe, who had been tapped that morning for his dropsy, caused himself to be carried in a sort of basket-carriage to the position, upon inspecting which he found that its fault consisted in having the River Escaut in the rear.

Across this river he had several bridges thrown, one especially as a line of retreat for the King in case of necessity.

Louis, jealous as ever of the Dauphin, upon proceeding to the front on the night of May 9th, purposely left the Dauphin behind him sleeping, giving orders that he was not to be awakened. The outpost fighting, however, on the 10th gave the Dauphin time to rejoin his father before the battle of Fontenoy, which commenced early on May 11th, 1745.

There are many accounts of this battle, of which some appear to be wilfully misleading. Such, for instance, are the remarks of that modern writer Guizot, who says, "The King and Dauphin had already taken up their positions of battle," as though Louis XV. had personally taken a part in the contest. Untrue also is the statement, from British sources, that "Brigadier-General Ingoldsby, who had been ordered to pierce the wood with a division, retired with dishonour," the truth being that that gallant officer, who was severely wounded, was given orders, by the Duke of Cumberland himself and others, of such a remarkably contradictory nature that, after commencing his advance, he obeyed the last given orders and remained on his ground, having, in fact, no other alternative. Never was a brave officer more falsely maligned than Ingoldsby, and never was there a greater misfortune than that he should have been stopped during his advance upon the redoubt and wood of Barry, in front of him, early in the day, and compelled to remain inactive under a heavy fire.

The French position contained three villages, which were strongly fortified and supplied with a hundred and twenty cannon. These were Barry on the right, Fontenoy

in the middle, and Antoing on the left. It was in rear of these three villages, upon high ground, that the main French army was posted. There was a little wood near Barry, and a plain between that place and Fontenoy, near which there was also some wooded ground.

In front of these villages were two ravines, which Cumberland had to cross with his infantry in order to attack, but which were impracticable for his cavalry. The guns which he took with him were drawn by hand. Thus the position was, as admitted by their writers, distinctly in favour of the French; although, in case of a reverse, the retreat of many thousands of men across the River Escaut by bridges could only prove disastrous.

To guard these bridges there were left twenty thousand men on the river banks, who were, therefore, out of action and useless; while in order to protect the King a force of six thousand men, including the Household Cavalry, gendarmerie, and flower of the army, were left with him in a post out of danger. This was near a mill on high ground, and a battery of artillery was also left there to protect the King and the Dauphin, who was unwillingly compelled to remain inactive with his father.

In this post of security, well protected, when first the cannons began to roar, Louis showed himself very lively while the carnage was commencing elsewhere. He, surrounded by his Ministers and Household troops, started singing a very free soldiers' song, causing those around him to join in the chorus.

While the King was brave thus—at a distance—the English, Dutch, and Hanoverians started to cross the

two ravines, and attack under the fire of all the heavy guns in the three redoubts in the villages. The incentive to this gallant advance was nothing less than the capture of the King of France. There were in the ranks of the allies many sons of the persecuted French Huguenots who were thirsting for the Bourbon blood of the great-grandson of the cruel Louis XIV.

The fault in the disposition of the French troops, which Saxe early recognised, was that there was a considerable opening which had been left between those at Barry and those at Fontenoy. He had now left his basket-carriage and mounted his horse, but he was unable to correct this fault before a huge column of English and Hanoverians crossed the ravines, traversed the plain under the terrific cross-fire of the redoubts at Barry and Fontenoy, and continued slowly and steadily to advance through this opening, leaving the French cannon useless behind them. Another column, of Dutch troops, meanwhile advanced towards Antoing on the French left, all of these troops marching admirably in order of battle. This column had on its right a force of British cavalry under Campbell, but the cannonade of Antoing checked the Dutch, while Campbell having his thigh shattered by a cannon-ball, his horse were driven back by the French cavalry, under the Comte d'Eu and the Chevalier d'Apcher.

Meanwhile, the combined British and Hanoverian column, fourteen thousand strong, continued its slow advance, forming itself into three great faces—that is, in shape of a square from which the hinder face had been removed. These three faces carried on a terrible rolling fire while their guns, drawn by hand, created frightful havoc. Approaching Fontenoy, they scattered

the French battalions opposed to them and carried all before them.

A line of French infantry, of the regiments of the King and of Aubeterre, of the Swiss Guards and Gardes Françaises, now advanced to within fifty paces of the British column. At the first volley these troops lost twenty-nine officers and two hundred and seventy-five men, after which the Gardes Françaises behaved badly and would not face the stern and solid ranks of the foe, who next drove back in succession all the other regiments who followed this first line.

Saxe now endeavoured to attack the three-sided square from two flanks at once. The right attack, however, arriving first, was crumpled up entirely by the British, and it seemed as if the moment of the French defeat had arrived. Saxe, in fact, now sent the Marquis de Meuse to request "the man of the mill," as Frederick the Great says Louis was called, to retire across the river. And meanwhile the Maréchal commenced the withdrawal of some of his troops. It is from the recital of the Duc de Richelieu that the best account is given of the subsequent events, although that noble glorifies himself too much when he suggests that he alone saw that the four cannon which the King had with him could be better employed in firing upon the unbroken square, for all saw this plainly, while it was a young artillery officer who suggested to Richelieu how to use them.

After crushing the right attack, the British and Hanoverian column next turned its attention to the left attack, and, while the French made all kinds of useless attempts to divide this irresistible body, their cavalry squadrons and infantry alike melted away before its

determined valour. Advancing still further, it completed the division of the French forces. Three times was the regiment des Vaisseaux, commanded by de Guerchy, driven back in disorder; the horse of the leader was killed, and himself injured. The Prince de Craon was killed at the head of his corps, while Colonel Dillon in the Irish Brigade fell mortally wounded while leading on his men.

The Maréchal de Saxe rallied his beaten men and sent them forward again in conjunction with the Irish Brigade under Lord Clare, who attacked the right flank of the great square with fury—but in vain.

For five hours did the British and Hanoverian corps thus victoriously maintain themselves before the onslaughts of a whole army, but the Dutch meanwhile had been compelled to retire.

While the French troops were thus being slaughtered in detail, a number of Lieutenant-Generals, not knowing what to do, rode up to the King asking for his orders and saying that all was lost, that there were no means to break into this unbreakable column, and that the time had come to retire. The Duc de Richelieu then asked the King's permission to join in a fresh charge with de Guerchy and his already broken corps, in order to see close at hand what was the condition of affairs. The Dauphin also requested permission to charge with the Household Cavalry, for which request the King never forgave his son, since it showed up his own cowardly inactivity. Richelieu was allowed to go, but the Dauphin ordered to remain at the mill with his father. Here, when some cannon-balls struck the ground or passed overhead, Louis XV. descended to a lower and safer position.

Richelieu charged with a brigade under de Guerchy, which was repulsed, when he came back and made his report to the King. We will now quote from his own words, in a relation of the circumstances of this famous battle which he wrote out for King Louis XVI. nearly forty years later.

"There were none of those with Louis XV. who did not propose a retreat and recognise the impossibility of a victory with troops as frightened as ours. Only the Duc de Richelieu ventured to give a contrary opinion. He remarked that with the system of attacking by successive small bodies it was impossible that our troops could gain any advantage over the hostile infantry. He added that he had no doubt that by cannonading this column, which was tightly packed together, it could be reduced to a state of great disorder, which would give back to our troops their courage and enable them to attack the mass from all parts at once, especially as it was unsupported by any cavalry. Then, if the enemy was not broken by the cannonading, it would be always time enough to retreat, but that without this previous cannonading a retreat could only be effected with the greatest danger.

"Some one replied, 'Where could we get the cannon?'

"'Quite close by,' replied the Duc de Richelieu; 'I have just seen a battery.'

"They answered that the Maréchal de Saxe had forbidden to remove this battery.

"The Duc de Richelieu remarked that this order had been given by the Maréchal before the present condition of affairs, but that the King was far above any General in the army.

"Nobody dared to say any more, when the Duc de Richelieu asked the King if His Majesty would be good enough to order that one might take the cannon of the said battery.

"His Majesty, much upset, consented, after having hesitated for some time. The Duc de Richelieu then told an officer whom he knew, named Isnard, to go and bring the cannon as quickly as possible, and Isnard obeyed with the greatest promptitude. There was not a single cannon-shot which did not produce its effect, and a terrible carnage was the result. Then we (the Household Cavalry) charged on all sides and succeeded in driving them completely away; which gave such courage to our troops that it became scarcely necessary to give them any orders. The enemy only thought of retiring in disorder, being charged from all sides."

So far the Duc de Richelieu; another excellent account was given of the battle in a letter written on May 14th by the *valet de chambre* of the Maréchal de Saxe, who was among the six thousand of the Household retained near the mill to protect the King.

After describing the courage of the dropsical Comte de Saxe, who remained nine hours on horseback in spite of the misery he suffered; after also stating that the allies lost sixty-three officers, three being Generals, and that he saw between four thousand and five thousand of their wounded on the ground, he says that the French took forty-four pieces of cannon and a quantity of stores from "these proud English, whom I do not think will appear again before us during this campaign.

"Now see our glory! This is what we risked. The enemy first of all attacked a village and a redoubt which we had on the right. It contained two brigades of

infantry and eight pieces of cannon, commanded by M. de Lutau. The enemy carried this work after a frightful carnage. We attacked again without losing breath and carried it at once. The enemy attacked in front. The fire and the bloodshed were awful on both sides. Our infantry was driven back after a two hours' conflict. The first and the second line of cavalry were ordered to advance; they were also driven back.

"At last Louis XV., who was present, performed miracles—for a King. He went so far as to rally his troops himself, saying to them with sweetness, 'Come! courage, my children! Return! I am going to put myself at your head.' And to others he said, with his whip in his hand: 'You are miserable wretches to abandon your comrades who are getting their throats cut.'"

Miracles indeed! for a King like Louis XV.; but what did Frederick of Prussia have to say of such miracles —for a King? Also what would have been the opinion of his ancestor Henry of Navarre? To return to our *valet de chambre*, he proceeds:

"The enemy continued to advance and became almost masters of the field of battle.

"The King, sweating great drops and all consternation, as also Monseigneur the Dauphin, said under these circumstances, 'Let my Household be advanced.' And he retired lower down, because the balls were coming up to his feet at every moment and often passed him. All seemed lost for us.

"We marched upon the enemy and attacked a battalion square of from ten to twelve thousand men. In a first and second charge we could never break them. In a third we shook them a little, but without making

them yield an inch of ground. Their fire crushed us. We sent word to the King under these circumstances, that his household stood firm, and that all would go well, only that we wanted some infantry and a few pieces of cannon. He sent us what we asked for.

"Again we attacked; the infantry made a little daylight for us. We entered into the battalion sword in hand and put them to flight, pursuing as far as a wood. Then the soldiers threw their hats into the air, crying, 'Vive le roi—the battle is gained!' The whole of the army was rallied among the unfortunate corpses."

A very cruel circumstance in connection with the battle of Fontenoy was that attending the death of the young Seigneur de Castelmoron, a boy fifteen years old. He was of the family of Béthune, of the blood of the Ducs de Sully.

A cavalry standard-bearer, being run away with by his horse, was surrounded by the enemy. This boy called five men to accompany him, charged, and brought back the man and the flag in safety.

He was modest to a degree and never mentioned the circumstance, which, however, became known in Paris, where many of the great nobles became jealous of the brilliancy of the brave lad's action. Among these a certain Monteclair superciliously called him 'Child!' Castelmoron, to prove that he was a man, challenged the bully Monteclair, who ran the poor boy through and stretched him dead at his feet. It was an act of sheer cold-blooded murder, for which, however, no punishment was inflicted.

The result of the battle of Fontenoy, in which each side lost about seven thousand men, proved very favourable to Louis. Tournay yielded to him, and the citadel

of that town fell nineteen days later. The Comte de Lowendhal and the Marquis du Chayla took Gand in the following month, Bruges soon followed, and then Lowendhal took Oudenarde. In August the Duc d'Harcourt caused Dendermonde to capitulate, and at the same time Lowendhal opened his trenches before Ostend, the Austrian garrison of which yielded, notwithstanding that the English were throwing in provisions to the city from the sea. After taking Ostend, Lowendhal captured Nieuport, taking all its garrison prisoners of war.

There still remained belonging to the Queen of Hungary the town of Ath, between the Dendre and the sea. Before the end of the autumn of 1745 the Lieutenant-General de Clermont-Gallerande reduced Ath also. Thus Maria Theresa had lost nearly all of the Low Countries. She continued, however, haughty as ever, and refused to treat for peace upon any other basis than the indivisibility of the Austrian possessions. Louis accordingly instructed the Maréchal de Saxe, although winter had fallen, to proceed to attack Brussels, the capital of Brabant.

Saxe invested Brussels, at the end of January, 1746, from all sides. Within a week he reduced the place to submission, capturing all the garrison, including seventeen Lieutenant-Generals, on February 7th. After Brussels, Lierres, Louvain, Malines, and many other places surrendered; it being on May 31st, or more than a year after Fontenoy, that the Comte de Clermont, a Prince of the Blood, by the capture of Antwerp, completed the conquest of all Brabant. Mons, in the province of Hainault, and Charleroi were soon added to the list of fallen places by the Prince de Conti, and Saint-Guilhain

by the Marquis de la Fare; while the clever manœuvres of the Maréchal de Saxe between the Meuse and the sea rendered the reduction of the city of Namur a simple matter for the Comte de Clermont. This city fell upon September 30th, 1746.

While victorious everywhere in the Low Countries, the French, who had weakened their army on the Rhine, had been compelled to recross that river. In Italy, however, the French, Spanish, and Genoese forces had defeated and separated the allied Austrian and Piedmontese troops. In the meantime the cause of all this war, the Bavarian Emperor Charles VII., had died in January, 1745, and Francis of Lorraine, the husband of Maria Theresa, had been elected Emperor in his stead.

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CHAPTER XX

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and the Maréchal de Saxe

1720—1750

THE career of the Comte Maurice de Saxe, the victor of Fontenoy, was one of remarkable interest. Born of the Swedish Countess of Kœnigsmark on October 19th, 1696, he was one of the several hundred illegitimate children of whom the Elector Frederick Augustus I. of Saxony (afterwards King Augustus II. of Poland) was credited with being the father.

At the early age of twelve Maurice was already a soldier, and, serving under Prince Eugène, was present at the sieges of Tournay and Mons, and present also in the bloody battle of Malplaquet in 1708. There Marlborough and Eugène lost twenty thousand men in a victory over the Maréchals de Boufflers and Villars, who only lost seven thousand, although driven from their entrenchments. Thus the boy saw war in its bloodiest aspects from his tenderest years, and, at the age of fifteen, he was given the command of a cavalry regiment, at the head of which he fought at Stralsund. In 1717, 1718, and 1720 we find the young man engaged still in the Austrian service in the most arduous warfare against the Turks, who were constantly invading Hungary and

other parts of the hereditary dominions of the Hapsburg Emperor Joseph I.

In the meantime he had not neglected to study both the arts of mathematics and the arts of love. The Princess Anna Ivanovna, niece of Peter the Great of Russia, became in 1710 the widow of Duke Frederick William of Courland. This is a Baltic province of Russia which in those days was ruled by sovereign dukes. Its capital is Mitau, and it possesses two good seaports in Libau and Windau. Of this Princess the young Maurice, who was remarkably handsome and manly in every way, became the acknowledged lover and favourite. When in 1730 the boy-Emperor Peter II., grandson of Peter the Great, died, Anna succeeded to the throne of Russia. Had it not been for his infidelities to her, Saxe would have been able to share this throne with the Empress, as also at an earlier date that of Courland. This duchy she would at all events have given to him had he continued sufficiently devoted, even although his jealous father, Augustus of Saxony and Poland, opposed the elevation of the son of the Countess of Kœnigsmark to the condition of a sovereign ruler.

As it was, Anna made over Courland, which then acknowledged the suzerainty of Poland, to another favourite, whom she had selected from the lowest classes. This was a Russian adventurer named Biron, or Bühren, who, the grandson of a groom, was a groom himself. After living for some time with Bühren in Mitau, Anna took him with her to St. Petersburg, made him Grand Chamberlain, and heaped riches upon him. Bühren, then elevated to the rank of a duke, had the effrontery to assume the coat-of-arms and name of the celebrated French ducal family of Biron. At the same time he

became practically the Emperor of Russia. The Princess Dolgorouki, who, when Anna was made Empress, had kicked Biron out of her closet and made it a condition that he should remain in Mitau, became one of the first victims of his vengeance. Executions followed each other, and thousands died—neither age nor sex being spared. One of Biron's favourite cruelties was causing his victims, men and women, to be put naked under the spouts of pumps in winter time and frozen to death!

Such was the man whom Anna sent to Courland to oppose the election to the ducal dignity of Maurice de Saxe, when the nobility of Courland, terrified of the man whom formerly they would not recognise and of all the weight of Russia behind him, made Biron their sovereign.

The Empress Anna died in 1740, leaving Biron as Regent of Russia during the infancy of her great-nephew Ivan VII. Field-Marshal Münich, however, conspiring in favour of the infant Ivan's mother, the Princess Anna, for the Regency, contrived to have Biron seized in his bed on the night of November 20th, 1740. He was condemned to death, but unfortunately spared and sent by Münich into exile and imprisonment for life into Siberia, where the Field-Marshal had caused a prison to be expressly prepared for the ruler of Courland. In the following year, 1741, Elizabeth Petrovna, the daughter of Peter the Great and Catharine I., obtained the throne. She recalled Biron, and sent Münich to occupy his prison, which was at Pelvin, six hundred miles beyond Tobolsk. The two antagonists met in Kazan while changing post-horses. They looked at each other, but did not speak!

Biron was now ordered to live in Zaroslaw, but when,

in 1762, Elizabeth was succeeded by her nephew Peter III., that Prince recalled Biron and sent him back as ruler to Courland, where, on dying in 1772, he was succeeded by his elder son Peter. Catharine II. of Russia, however, seized the Duchy of Courland twenty-three years later, whose history since 1795 has therefore become that of Russia.

Peter Biron purchased several ducal estates in Prussia, notably that of Sagan, where he died in 1800. One of his four daughters, first known as the Duchess of Dino and afterwards as the Duchess of Sagan, was still an ornamental figure in political and aristocratic European society in the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, even in the times of those still living have the grandchildren of the opponent of Maurice de Saxe been well known. He, meanwhile, after the Turkish war of 1720 had repaired to Paris, where he asked for, and obtained, a command from Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, the Regent, to whom the fact of Saxe being a Protestant made no difference.

From his first appearance in Paris Maurice excited the greatest interest, which was increased when he commenced to discipline and manœuvre a French regiment according to an entirely new scheme of his own devising. It was not until 1726 that he proceeded to Courland for the first time from Paris, in order to endeavour to obtain the Duchy. At that time his design was favoured by the then Duchess Anna Ivanovna, whom there was some question of his then marrying. His election was duly secured, but the opposition of Russia and his father the King of Poland compelled Maurice de Saxe to give up Courland and return to Paris. In 1728 the Duchess, who was still in love with him, recalled him once more,

after which she turned her affections to Biron, as we have described.

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century there already existed in Paris a woman whom it has been said that Voltaire "tenderly loved." If this was true, his love can only have existed and been returned for a time before it developed into a very close friendship, during which Voltaire was the complaisant confidant of the lady's love for another, whom she sought to idealise as a veritable hero. The lady was Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, the celebrated actress, and the man to whom she devoted herself was the Comte Maurice de Saxe.

It is said of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur that she was "a rare person, admired and adored and, what was more, esteemed." When, at the Comédie Française, she played the part of Jocaste in Voltaire's tragedy *Œdipe*, she was "more than an actress, she was the heroine herself. She had a real genius, free from the monotonous sing-song which Racine taught to Champmeslé, free from the bombastic emphasis which pleased Voltaire. A spectator said on coming out, 'I have seen the Queen of all comedians!' When she made her début, which was not until the age of twenty-seven, all were ravished, and troubled. Young people became crazy from love of her. She was the first who upon the stage spoke really from the heart."

Such was the woman under whose polished influences fell Maurice de Saxe, when, a rough mixture of Saxon, Swede, and Pole, he came to Paris straight from the scenes of blood and slaughter among which he had been brought up. This soldier and countryman was indeed in want of some of the culture and refined graces of Paris, in order to fit himself for the distinguished career which

he seemed anxious to make for himself more by some Imperial marriage than by the use of his trusty sword.

Mademoiselle de Lecouvreur, who fell deeply in love with the handsome soldier, devoted all her energies towards giving to his nature the necessary polish. She became not merely his mistress but his preceptress, and, by rounding off the rough edges, made of him a finished noble who had assimilated the nobility of her own character. She even led the footsteps of this most redoubtable warrior into the paths of literature, with such success that he became the author of a book in five volumes entitled *Mes rêveries*, which contains many useful hints on the art of war. In it he appeared to offer himself to dethrone his father, saying that he would take Poland in two campaigns at the most, without its capture costing a sou.

When, at one time, he thought seriously of espousing the Princess of Courland, Maurice de Saxe found himself obliged to take a tender farewell of his mistress, she did not complain. On the contrary, the devoted woman thought with joy that he whom she loved might become King or Czar. She poured all her savings into his lap, sold her silver and diamonds, and forced the proceeds upon her hero, in order that he might be able to cut a fine figure in his undertakings. Then when, after having seemed to be the master of Courland, he returned, through a thousand perils and hairbreadth escapes, she welcomed him back as tenderly as she had sent him away.

Saxe was now more than ever a hero, a Roland or a Charles XII., not only for Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, but for the world at large. Several other Courts besides those of France thought of employing him in the further-



From an engraving after the picture by H. Rigaud.

MAURICE DE SAXE,
Maréchal de France.

ance of their schemes. While Elizabeth Farnese in Madrid wished to place him at the head of the proposed Spanish expedition to restore the Stuart upon the British throne, Stanislas Lesczynski imagined that he saw in Maurice the man whom destiny had selected to reconquer for him the throne of Poland.

At the same time that distinguished men, like the gallant Comte d'Argental, thought so highly of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur as to offer her their hand and their heart, she was, on her side, not spared the pain of seeing the greatest ladies in France throwing themselves at her lover's head. Nor did these women take the pains to conceal the bitter hatred with which they regarded Mademoiselle Lecouvreur.

At the theatre these great ladies took advantage of their position to hiss the soul-ravishing actress from their boxes. One of those who had flung herself, and it is to be feared not unavailingly, at the head of the handsome Saxe, was the Duchesse de Bouillon, who, being of the princely family of Lorraine, was related to half the crowned heads in Europe.

One day, when playing Phèdre, the popular tragedienne saw this grand dame insulting her by her supercilious looks and scornful remarks to those around her. Anger arose within the breast of the faithful woman as she beheld these contemptuous *agaceries*, and she determined to be revenged upon her high-born rival. Advancing to the front of the stage and fixing the Duchesse de Bouillon with her piercing glance, she hurled at her the verses :

> Je ne suis point de ces femmes hardies
> Qui portant dans le crime une tranquille paix
> Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais !

The audience stared up at the box, saw the point as it applied to the Lorraine Princesse, and violently applauded the actress.

She, however, like Madame de Châteauroux with Maurepas, had insulted an implacable foe who would have a dire revenge. In those days of the meek-minded Cardinal Fleury anything was permissible towards actresses. Not long before the two Camargos, quite young and of noble Spanish birth, had made their appearance upon the stage, where they created a furore by their dancing. Suddenly they disappeared, and for two years the police were not willing to know where they were. They had been carried off, and were being kept in a detestable house by a young noble, one of the badly spoken of associates of the then youthful Louis XV. Tired of them both, they were let loose at length, when the people laughed as if at a good joke.

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur had more to fear than being carried off. Not long after the scene in the theatre, a polite Abbé offered her some poisoned pastilles. A few days later a celebrated painter of miniatures informed her that the Duchesse de Bouillon had asked him to poison her. The painter showed her the poison, which the actress caused to be analysed by a celebrated apothecary named Geoffroi. Thereupon the painter was arrested and thrust into the horrible prison of Saint-Lazare, nor could the complaints of the woman whom he had warned obtain his release.

She now made arrangements for her own death, which every one expected. With Voltaire and the Comte d'Argental she drew up her will, making d'Argental her sole legatee, in order that he might save her fortune

for her two little girls from the hands of her grasping relatives. These things being settled, once more she played the part of Jocaste for Voltaire. Two days later she was seized with terrible agonies, and died in forty-eight hours.

Before dying, when Languet, a Vicaire of Saint-Sulpice, came to visit her, she told him that she had not forgotten the poor in her will. Then, pointing to a bust of Maurice de Saxe, the half-delirious woman said, "Behold my universe, my hope, and my gods!" It is to be noted that Saxe himself does not appear to have been present to comfort the dying woman, who had done for herself with the Church by these supposed infidel words, since Languet made his report to Archbishop Vintimille. This prelate, whose doubtful behaviour in the matter of the marriage of his nephew to the King's mistress we have seen, was inexpressibly shocked. He refused a Christian burial to the poor actress. Her friends had her body carried away in a package by two porters, and eventually they buried her under the corner boundary of a wood-yard by night. They could not get into the wood-yard, which was locked, otherwise that would have been the proper place in those days for the interment of one branded by the Church as a free-thinker.

The career of Maurice de Saxe in the French service had already become brilliant but very shortly after the death of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur; and then came Fontenoy, in which we have seen how he behaved. Subsequent to that battle and the succeeding capture of Austrian cities in Flanders, the Maréchal de Saxe defeated the allies, under Prince Charles of Lorraine, in an important battle at Raucoux. In this engagement, which was fought on October 11th, 1746, the

English left wing suffered severely. The result of the affair was not, however, of any signal importance to France, although to Saxe it brought the title of Maréchal-Général, and the gift from the King of princely estates at Chambord. In 1747 and 1748 Saxe captured Laffeld and Bergen-op-Zoom, and invested, and would have taken, the important Dutch city of Maestricht, had not Louis XV., to his General's intense disgust, concluded peace by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle before the fall of that place had been accomplished.

After the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, Saxe retired to his estates at Chambord, where he lived in a style of princely magnificence until his death. This, which was the result of his debauchery and high living, took place on November 30th, 1750, when this man of great military talent had reached the age of fifty-four.

CHAPTER XXI

Mademoiselle Poisson—Marquise de Pompadour

1745

How many are there of those who have heard the stately name of Madame de Pompadour—one which rolls sonorously from the tongue—who know that the real name of this King's favourite was Mademoiselle Poisson—Miss Fish ?

This lady first saw the light in Paris in 1720, although she herself always made her birth two years later. She was the reputed daughter of one Poisson, an army contractor who was sentenced to be hanged for purloining stores or robbing the State ; he was also in the butchery business, and supplied the Hospital des Invalides with meat. However, the King pardoned him shortly after Mademoiselle Poisson began first to flutter around his Royal person, being at that time persuaded by the party who wished to forward the affairs of Madame de la Tournelle that it would be cheaper to pardon the father than to be moved by the blandishments of the daughter.

Jeanne Antoinette Poisson has been given several fathers. While Voltaire supplies her with a farmer of Ferté-sous-Jouarre in that capacity, others credit the farmer-general Lenormant, or le Normand, de Tourne-

heim, who brought her up, with having been her male parent. He was very rich and related to the celebrated farmers-general the brothers Pâris-Duverney and the rest—who were the godfathers of Jeanne Antoinette Poisson.

Every advantage that a young girl can have was showered upon the youthful Jeanne. Music, drawing, painting, dancing, literature—these she was instructed in from an early age, and in all proved an apt pupil. Her gifts being early known, men of talent who were not of the high nobility, such as Voltaire, Crébillon, the aged Fontenelle and Duclos, were frequently to be seen at the hotel in which she lived. They praised her beauty as well as her accomplishments from the time that she was fifteen or sixteen—at least, so we are told.

As a matter of fact, even at that early age this plebeian jewel was being educated for the King—if she could catch him. Her mother openly said, "C'est un morceau de roi," while she herself posed as early as 1740 as being the *amoureuse du roi*. When she was only nine years old it was predicted that she would become the King's mistress.

There have been various volumes concerning her career which have come down to us from the eighteenth century, which no doubt contain a good deal of truth with a certain amount of imagination. Every memoir writer of her day has also had something to say about "*la petite* Poisson," who became "*la petite* d'Étioles" before blossoming out under the grander title of a family that had just died out, and which Louis XV. passed on to her. During the Regency there was a Marquis de Pompadour, who intrigued with the Duchesse du Maine and the King of Spain against the Duc d'Orléans.



From the picture by Boucher in the National Gallery of Scotland. *Photo by T. & R. Annan, Glasgow.*

MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR.

No writer of modern times has written more prettily of the celebrities of the eighteenth century than Arsène Houssaye, who some sixty years ago—that is, in the middle of the nineteenth century—produced his chatty works. In them he has tacked together in an amusing manner all that is to be found elsewhere concerning the early life of Jeanne Antoinette Poisson. We cannot, therefore, do better than quote some of his paragraphs—they form a perfect picture.

"Louis XV., the son of a King, was born a farmer-general: that is to say, to sup well, love women, pleasure, and money. Madame de Pompadour, the daughter of a farmer-general, was born a queen, loving power, luxury, the fine arts, everything that belongs to the splendour of royalty. . . .

"The history of Madame de Pompadour is unknown in its details; it is, however, a name that radiates upon the past century with more brightness than the name of Louis XV. . . . Some have exalted her virtues; others exaggerated her crimes. Both are in error. A courtier and a disappointed applicant for favours are neither of them historians when they write. With a little patience, studying at leisure the writers of the eighteenth century, it is possible to catch here and there a faithful feature of her charming face. But how fathom the depths of the dark ambition of her heart, which wore the mask of a perpetual smile! Ask Vanloo, la Tour, Boucher, if they could ever, when she sat for them, detect any of the secrets of her love or her policy.

"Madame de Pompadour was an example of a woman both handsome and pretty. The lines of her face possessed all the harmony and elevation of a creation of Raphael; but instead of the elevated sentiment with

which that great master animated his faces, there was the smiling expression of the *Parisienne*. She possessed in the highest degree all that gives to the face brilliancy, charm, and sportive gaiety. No lady at Court had then so noble and coquettish à bearing, such delicate and attractive features, so elegant and graceful a figure. Her mother used always to say, 'A King alone is worthy of my daughter.' Jeanne had an early presentiment of a throne—at first from the ambitious longings of her mother, later because she imagined that she was in love with the King.

"'She confessed to me,' says Voltaire in his *Memoirs*, 'that she had a secret presentiment that the King would fall in love with her, and that she had a violent inclination for him.'

"Well, how was the throne of France to be reached, the very idea of which made her head turn? In the meantime, full of genius, always admired, always listened to, she familiarised herself with the life of a beautiful Queen; she saw at her feet all the worshippers of her father's fortune, she gathered about her poets, artists, and philosophers, over whom she already threw a Royal protection.

"The farmer-general had a nephew, Lenormant d'Étioles. He was an amiable young man and had the character and manners of a gentleman; he was also heir to the immense fortune of the farmer-general, at least according to the law. Jeanne, on her side, had some claim to a share of this fortune. It was a very simple way of making all agreed by marrying the young people.

"Jeanne, as we have seen, was already in love with the King; she married d'Étioles without shifting her

point in view. Versailles, Versailles—that was her only horizon. Her young husband became desperately enamoured of her ; but this passion of his, almost amounting to madness, she never felt in the least. She accepted it with resignation as a misfortune that could not last long.

" The hôtel of the newly married couple, Rue Croix des Petits Champs, was established on a lordly footing : the best company in Paris left the fashionable salons for that of Madame d'Étioles ; until that time there had never been such a gorgeous display of luxury in France. The young bride hoped by this means to make something of a noise at Court, and thus excite the curiosity of the King. Day after day passed away in feasts and brilliant entertainments. Celebrated actors, poets, artists, and foreigners made their rendezvous at this hôtel, the mistress of which was its life and ornament : in one word, all the world went there but the King. . . . The Abbé Bernis was the Abbé of Madame d'Étoiles, he had no other abbey or benefice. Did the Abbé and the mistress of the hôtel suspect that in ten years from that time they would rule over France as Ministers with absolute power ?

" There was also among this celebrated circle a good-looking and good-natured pagan, who went by the name of *Gentil* Bernard. Madame d'Étioles treated him like a child, but he was the la Fontaine without genius of a la Sablière without virtue. He was thought to be in some degree her lover ; he did not, however, become Minister with her. She had, nevertheless, the memory of the heart—she made him librarian to the King.

" Madame d'Étioles swore fidelity to her husband, provided the King did not make love to her. The

husband laughed at this reservation. It was first talked about at home, in their house; the rumour reached Versailles. The King said in joke, 'I would like to see the husband.'

"M. d'Étioles had a deserted château in the forest of Sénart; Madame d'Étioles, having heard that the King often hunted in that forest, told her husband that the physicians recommended her the forest air for her nervous attacks. Her husband, not foreseeing his wife's design, furnished the château with great luxury. Once installed in her new quarters, Madame d'Étioles ordered three or four carriages of a light, fairy-like build, in order to take the air for her attacks of the vapours.

"As she was always on the watch, she often met the King in the forest. 'What a beautiful phaeton!' he said, meeting her for the third time. Finally he noticed her, but confined himself to a remark on her good looks.

"One afternoon during a rainstorm the King entered the Château d'Étioles, but Madame de Châteauroux was with him. Madame d'Étioles was not disheartened; she continued to pass before the eyes of the Royal hunter, according to Soulavie, 'sometimes like a goddess descended from heaven, at one time dressed in an azure robe seated in a rose-coloured phaeton, at another dressed in rose colour in an azure phaeton.'"

At Étioles there were private theatricals, in which la petite d'Étioles always took the principal parts; but although she contrived to get some of the principal courtiers to attend them, including the Duc de Richelieu, the King, well watched by Madame de Châteauroux, never came to inspect the young actress behind the scenes.

Thus for a long time was this designing woman's

ambition to become faithless to her husband with the King frustrated. Two years passed away, and still she had not succeeded—and then the Duchesse de Châteauroux died.

Despite the praises which have been showered upon her beauty, her portraits do not represent Madame d'Étioles, or de Pompadour, at all as a healthy woman. If her father was the butcher, her cheeks had none of the rosy hue of the typical butcher's daughter. The Parisians made silly verses about her name, they were called *poissonnades*, in which they said that she resembled rather the fish she was named after than the good fresh meat which her father had dealt in, not wisely but too well. From her pictures she has an amiable appearance, pale, with agreeable but by no means striking features. From an early age she was sickly and used to spit blood. She gave up her drives in the forest at length, as she found that she was apt to get a chill; and no sooner was Châteauroux dead, than she sought more direct means of gaining access to the King.

She commenced by being unfaithful to her husband with M. de Briges, the King's equerry. The rest was easy; one night he took her to the King.

He was at first by no means charmed with Madame d'Étioles, who was then twenty-three with two children. For a month after that first interview, which had not left a favourable impression, Louis forgot her entire existence. In vain she waited day after day for a note to tell her to come again; no billet-doux made its appearance—there was not even a message. At last, through her friends at Court, the woman, nearly driven to desperation, contrived to get the King reminded of her. They

tried to excite his interest by representing that since the night that he had received Madame d'Étioles the poor lady had led a dreadful life; her husband was desperately, frantically jealous, he made her life a perfect hell owing to his jealousy of His Majesty. The necessary stimulus was thus applied, and the King, thinking that some one else did not wish to let her go, imagined that she might be a treasure after all, although he had not at first perceived it. He asked her to supper with Richelieu, who did not pay her much attention. When Richelieu had retired, she played the part of a woman who had nowhere to go, saying that the King must hide her somewhere; she could not, dare not return to her jealous husband—he would kill her. Excellent actress as she was, she played this part so well that the King felt flattered and believed her. He kept Madame d'Étioles hidden for several days after that night, which was that of April 22nd, 1745.

Letters of despair actually commencing to arrive from her unfortunate husband, letters reminding her of her two children and begging her to return, Louis determined all the more not to let her go. After three days Louis hid her no longer, but, in spite of the mute despair and disgusted looks of his own family, resolved to keep Madame d'Étioles altogether. Openly the King now declared her as his mistress, and the declaration came with the greater shock to all of his devout family from the fact that he selected the holy season of Easter for making his determination known. A fortnight later he dignified this low-born woman, whose very parentage was doubtful, with the title of a noble family only just extinct, its last member having been the Abbé de Pompadour.

By May 6th, 1745, Mademoiselle Poisson had become Madame la Marquise de Pompadour! And then Louis went off to the war and the battle of Fontenoy, and, according to some accounts, he took the newly created Marquise with him to the camp before Tournai, where he arrived on the night of the 9th of that month. For the little Fish had indeed come to stay—for twenty years!

CHAPTER XXII

Bonnie Prince Charlie and Flora Macdonald

1744 AND LATER

KING FREDERICK II., the Great, of Prussia, had considerable cause for discontent in the year 1745 with Louis XV., his ally in the War of the Austrian Succession. Although the King of France had, by the prowess of the Maréchal de Saxe, won in May the battle of Fontenoy, and overrun the Austrian Low Countries; he had in no particular helped Frederick by this campaign in Flanders, undertaken solely for his own glorification. On the contrary, the French King's Generals, de Coigny and de Noailles, had listened to neither the advice nor the prayers of the King of Prussia, and, by their unwillingness to assist him, by attacking the Austrians on the Rhine with their superior forces, had exposed Frederick and his army to the greatest danger of annihilation.

While, by his own splendid generalship and bravery, the Prussian had extricated himself from the mess into which the French had led him by not keeping their promises, he, with reason, remained very angry with his allies, and complained to Louis XV. that his battles would have been "quite as useful if fought on the banks of the Scamander or at the taking of Pekin."

Meanwhile, Maria Theresa, who, by the assistance of the continuous supplies of British gold, had succeeded in getting her husband, Francis of Lorraine, elected Emperor on the death of Charles VII., remained haughty and implacable towards Prussia. Her pride was even greater than her fury—she neither saw the situation, nor listened to any propositions for coming to terms. Frederick, from previous experience, knew that the newly made Empress only became good and mild after receiving good thrashings. He accordingly administered plenty of these. After each refusal—a victory!

Having defeated the allied Austrians and Saxons at Hohenfriedberg on June 4th, 1745, at Sorr on September 30th, at Kesseldorf on December 15th, and having taken Dresden immediately after, Frederick found that Maria Theresa had had about enough, and was inclined to come down off her high horse. She now made peace with him, while definitely confirming the cession of Silesia to Prussia. England also came to terms by the Peace of Dresden on December 22nd, 1745.

While France was now, for the second time since the beginning of her participation in the war in 1742, left alone by Frederick, she had only had herself to blame upon each occasion, owing to the extreme selfishness of her conduct. That country now indeed found herself in a fix, especially as the young Elector of Bavaria also deserted her, on behalf of whose father, created Emperor by France, she had commenced the war.

This desertion was felt all the more keenly at Versailles from the fact that France had recently paid for the formation of a new mercenary army of Hessians for the son of Charles VII., which army he treacherously handed over to Maria Theresa.

For eleven years now Frederick was able to remain at peace. During that time he devoted his energies to the interests of his subjects, whose numbers he had more than doubled since, as a young man of twenty-eight, he became in 1740 the ruler of Brandenburg and Prussia. While devoting himself to the reorganisation of his army, to the advancement of agriculture, manufactures, education, commerce, and the improvement of the legal code, Frederick did not forget that literature which he delighted in more than war. He now wrote his two volumes the *Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg*, and his poem *The Art of War*. So devoted, indeed, was this, by far the greatest commander of the eighteenth century, to his literary pursuits, that often when his tent was pitched upon the site of some sanguinary battle, fought that day, Frederick would sit up for hours correcting a poem or inditing an essay.

France, meanwhile, remained with her Spanish allies, the Bourbon cousins at Madrid and Naples, alone to help her and the little Republic of Genoa against Austria and the King of Sardinia in the north of Italy. Between them, however, they had done good work in 1745, by roughly separating, and rendering useless for the time, the Piedmontese and forces of Maria Theresa, and by crowning the Infante Don Philip in triumph at Milan. What, however, seemed to France as far more grave for the moment than anything else was the situation in Scotland, where the young and Catholic Stuart had effected a landing at Moidart on July 25th in that year.

Charles Edward Louis Philip Casimir was the second son born to James Stuart (the old Pretender, son of

King James II.) and Clementina Sobieski, granddaughter of King John III., Sobieski, of Poland. He was born in Rome on the last day of the year 1720, when his unfortunate mother was six days in labour. He had a younger brother living in 1744 when he first came to France, who accompanied him. This brother, Henry Benedict Maria Clement, was born in 1725, and was made a Cardinal by Benedict XIV. when he took orders in 1747, whereupon, at the age of twenty-two, he was known as the Cardinal of York. On the death of his brother Charles Edward in 1788 he assumed the title of King of England as Henry IX. *gratia Dei non voluntate hominem*, as the medal which he caused to be struck on the occasion declared.

The Chevalier de St. George, as the rightful James III., the old Pretender, called himself, was still alive when his son came to Paris, and he lived until 1766. How signally he had failed in his attempt in 1715 to regain his father's crown all know well. He then proceeded to Scotland too late after the insurrection of the Earl of Mar had begun; moreover, his ungracious manner alienated the sympathies of those who were risking lives and fortunes in his cause. Neither did he evince any of the qualities of a commander before his speedy return to France. It was to seize the throne of Great Britain as Regent for his father that the various proposed expeditions under Charles Edward were planned; he was, indeed, proclaimed Regent in Edinburgh.

When he came to France in 1744 Louis XV. behaved strangely towards this young Prince, his kinsman, in refusing to see him. He nevertheless caused an army of fifteen thousand men to be assembled under the Maréchal de Saxe on the northern coast of France,

and furnished twenty ships of the line and five frigates to convoy Charles Edward and Saxe across with this army into England.

The English Channel fleet was but small, owing to a large squadron being in the Mediterranean, when the Prince and the Maréchal embarked at the close of February. This was the most favourable opportunity which the Stuarts had ever had since the deposition of James II. in 1688. There was much discontent in England, they had a powerful party in Scotland, and the Irish party looked upon them as promised deliverers.

Young Charles Edward, who had already seen war and fought bravely with the Spanish army before Gaeta in his fourteenth year, was enthusiastic, bold, and resolute. He did not take at all after his half-Italian and dreamy father, the son of Mary d'Este of Modena, but had inherited the nature of his Polish mother and the high character of the spirited race from which she sprang. He had early given indications of talent and a firmness of character derived from her, which firmness misfortune later caused to degenerate into sheer obstinacy. He had been well educated by Protestant tutors, spoke several foreign languages, and was dexterous in all manly exercises. Charles Edward had, moreover, a taste for the fine arts, and was a good musician.

Thus, personally, there was no reason why he should not succeed, although, going over as a Catholic to restore a Catholic dynasty in Protestant Britain, he was likely to arouse against him the feeling of enormous numbers who otherwise in their hearts would have preferred to have seen the legitimate Jacobite rather than the Hanoverian line continued.

This Prince became a Protestant in 1752; had he

become one sooner, one wonders what would have been the result in 1745 when he reached Scotland. For in 1744, after embarking with Saxe, Charles Edward was doomed never to get across the Channel. On March 6th a great storm arose which lasted for a week. Many ships filled with French troops were lost, and the rest forced back to France. Nor then would Louis XV. allow a renewal of the attempt, although it was with great difficulty that the brave young Prince was prevented from sailing to Scotland alone in a fishing-boat. He remained in France, moving heaven and earth to get assistance. He stirred up the foundations of Versailles secretly through his brother, who was far more adroit than himself. He worked through the intriguing Cardinal Tencin, and through the Duc de Richelieu, who hoped to obtain the command of the expedition.

At last, in an underhand sort of way, Versailles consented to lend two ships, privateers belonging to an Irish filibuster, or corsair, at Nantes. France gave him no troops, only a few arms, and very little money. A few volunteers accompanied him when, in July, 1745, Charles Edward sailed, and of money he had from all sources obtained less than £5,000 sterling. He lost one of his ships with all his stores in a sea-fight in crossing, but landed at Moidart in safety.

As a modern French writer says, "All this could not stop the brave Prince. He had his romance in his head, to leave the too prudent Jacobites alone, and to fling himself at first upon the Highlands of Scotland, among those valiant savages with the short petticoats, uncalculating and ready for the fray.

"Polish madness added to Gaelic craziness: all

that might produce something extraordinary—great. The absurdity of the thing, the improbability, aided its success. Arriving alone and without foreign forces, he had all the better chance. No care for ways or means! He calculated so little that he had taken the most unpopular dress, the one the most detested in England, that of the Scottish seminary in Paris.

"All was arranged by signs and looks, for he did not know their tongue nor they his. They saw him, and were moved. As soon as they were twelve hundred, with the bagpipes at the head, they descended upon Edinburgh; then they became three thousand.

"Without stopping to count, they charge the English at Preston Pans, and defeat them. All Scotland declares herself. But the difficulty is to lead to London these sons of the mountain so attached to their natal soil. The further he plunges into England the more he hopes two things: that the old loyalty will animate the heart of the English Jacobites; that France, Spain, will blush in the end—will not see him perish.

"The help was strange: three companies of French troops, just enough to compromise us without strengthening him. The Jacobites, on the other hand, far from making any movement, were frightened. They would do nothing without a large army from France.

"The Whigs, the anti-Jacobites, did not move either. It was just like the invasion of William in 1688—there was no movement on either side. But, upon this occasion, the circumstance was all the more amusing from the fact that it took place at the very moment when the English—imagining the war far away, in Germany—were boiling over with valour; fighting with words, pitilessly breathing fire and flames. War!

Well, here it is, at two days' march from London. One says, 'I am a merchant,' another, 'I am a banker' or 'I am a farmer. This is the King's—the soldiers' business.' Comic situation!"

Comic, however, the situation, thus excellently described, was not for the unfortunate Charles Edward. After having taken Carlisle and Derby, and when within ninety-four miles of London, the chiefs who had accompanied him became so discouraged by this coldness everywhere that they strongly urged their courageous young leader to beat a retreat to the north, where a fresh army had been formed, partly consisting of the three miserable companies sent from France. He bitterly opposed this course, and events showed that he was right; had his army but pushed on, London would inevitably have fallen into his hands, and then his secret sympathisers would have thrown off their apathy and flown to his standard. London itself was full of them.

During his retreat, as in his advance, Charles Edward out-generalled and out-marched the troops sent against him, whom he repulsed with great loss at Clifton. He afterwards won a victory over General Hawley at Falkirk in January, 1746, and also took Glasgow.

At length, on April 16th, his half-starved troops were defeated by the Duke of Cumberland with an army at Culloden Moor, near Inverness; but only after the gallant right wing of the Highlanders had charged, claymore in hand, and driven back the front line of the Hanoverian King's troops opposed to them.

Had the left wing of the young Pretender's forces but done as well, the day might perhaps have been his. But they, consisting of the Macdonalds, would not fight, from jealousy of the McLeans, Frasers, McIntoshes,

Camerons, and Stuarts, who had been put on the right, which the Macdonalds claimed as their own position from the days of Bannockburn. The left wing accordingly remained inactive, childishly chopping at the heather-clad soil with their claymores; until first the British cannon tore their ranks to pieces, and then the onslaughts of some dragoons, who had pulled down a wall in order to charge, completed their discomfiture. Thus it was that Bonnie Prince Charlie lost the day, and the crown for his father into the bargain.

His subsequent flight for five months, and concealment in company with the brave young lady, Flora Macdonald, who hid him in the Isle of Skye, have been made as much the matter of romance as of history; they are too well known to be more than referred to. The Prince escaped eventually to France, where, for the first time, Louis XV. deigned to receive him.

Before detailing his further career, a few lines may, however, be devoted to that of his preserver, Flora Macdonald, who was a handsome and agreeable young lady. When Charles Edward, who had been disguised as "Betty Bourke, a stout Irishwoman," while fleeing from place to place with Flora Mardonald, eventually bade farewell for ever to that young lady at Portree, in the Isle of Skye, her share in his escape became known. After being kept in detention for five months on various vessels of war, she was taken to London, where she suffered a light imprisonment. Frederick, the Prince of Wales, having visited her, became interested in her, and caused her to be discharged under the Act of Indemnity of 1747, before the passing of which a great number of Jacobites lost their heads, while others were exiled.

Flora remained for some time in London, where she was made much of, in the house of Lady Primrose, a Jacobite sympathiser, but, returning to Scotland, she married the younger Macdonald of Kingsburgh in 1750. She emigrated to North Carolina with him and her family twenty-five years later, when she was fifty-five years old, having been born in 1720, the same year as Charles Edward, the object of her romantic attachment.

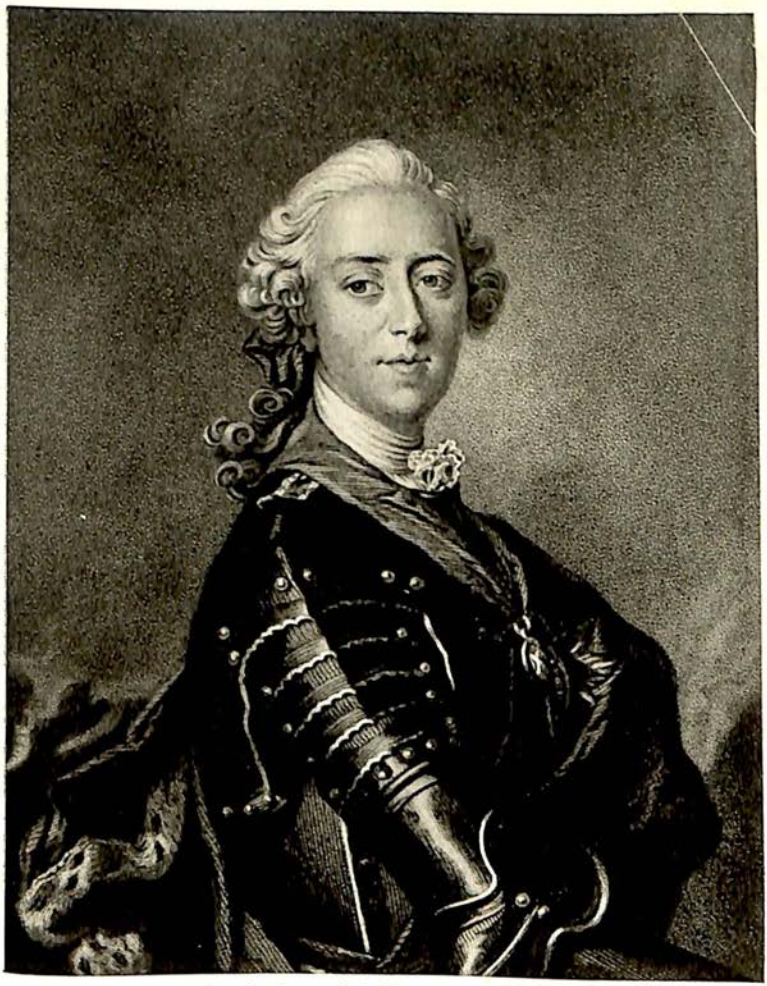
Siding with the loyalists in the revolutionary war of the American colonies, her family suffered some losses, when Mrs. Macdonald sailed alone for Europe. While on the voyage, the ship that she was in fought an engagement with a French vessel, during the course of which this companion of the flight of the Young Pretender was severely injured by a fall. She was eventually joined by her husband and family in Scotland, and sent all of her four sons into the British service.

When Flora Macdonald died, on March 4th, 1790, her body was wrapped in a sheet which she had romantically carried about with her ever since 1746. It was one upon which the disguised Prince Charlie had slept when she had been his hostess in the house at Kingsburgh. That house had then been occupied by Mr. Macdonald, her father's factor, whose son she herself married five years later.

Charles Edward, after having been received by Louis XV. at Versailles, became a great favourite at the Court, where he was looked upon as a hero. He led a life of considerable dissipation, gambling a good deal, and forming some romantic liaisons which caused him to become strongly wedded to life in Paris. With his brother, however, he became on bad terms, which resulted in the departure of Henry of York to take holy

orders at Rome. Some faint show was made of renewing the attempt to invade England, but, as the young Pretender refused to promise to cede Ireland to France in case of success, it never came to anything. He paid a visit to the Court of Spain in 1747, where he was received with Royal honours, and courted and fêted even more than in France. To this country he returned before long, and installed himself once more in his beloved Paris.

When Louis concluded the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, one of the provisions of that treaty, made by the English King, was that such a dangerous firebrand as this young Charles Edward should no longer be allowed to remain in the French dominions. He was, accordingly, at first courteously requested to leave Paris, but he refused to go. Having been again asked to leave, he armed himself and his household, and threatened to shoot down any one attempting to lay a hand upon him. At the same time he went about as usual, and carried on his ordinary amusements and dissipations, but always with loaded pistols in his pockets. The English remonstrances now becoming urgent, Louis determined to expel by force the grandson of James II. from his capital. Accordingly, one night, as Charles Edward was entering the doors of the Opera-house, he was suddenly seized from behind by several officers and, in spite of his furious resistance, disarmed, bound with silken cords, hurried into a carriage, and put into confinement in very comfortable quarters at Vincennes. By a preconcerted movement his followers had been dexterously separated from the furious Prince at the moment of his arrest, which had only been the result of his own obstinacy.



From an engraving after the picture by le Tocque, 1748.

PRINCE CHARLES EDWARD STUART.

Forced to leave Paris, he repaired to Papal territory at Avignon, where he was again requested to move on. The same thing happening in Venice, he repaired to Germany; after which for a time Prince Charlie resided in the Duchy of Bouillon. After becoming a Protestant in 1752, he engaged in some new Jacobite conspiracies, and even visited London both in 1750 and 1753. When, by his father's death in 1766, he had become the legitimate King of Great Britain, he did not, like his brother Henry, assume the title of King, but took that of Duke of Albany, which he had already borne many years earlier.

When fifty-two years of age Charles Edward committed the lamentable error of marrying a young lady thirty years younger than himself. She was a Princess Louisa of Stolberg-Gedern, who soon made of him a dishonoured husband. His faithless spouse eventually eloped with the Italian poet, Count Vittorio Alfieri; when the Prince obtained a judicial separation from one who had never brought him anything but unhappiness and shame. She, however, complained of him that he had given way to intemperance, to which he is said to have become addicted, owing to having learned to drink whiskey while in Scotland.

Charles Edward died at Rome on January 30th, 1788, leaving an illegitimate daughter but no legal issue behind him. He was a man of more marked ability than had been any of the Stuarts who preceded him.

CHAPTER XXIII

Manœuvres of the Marquis d'Argenson

1744—1746

WHEREAS the Comte Marc Pierre d'Argenson had been a member of the Council of Ministers in 1742, and had become Minister of War on the death of the Marquis de Breteuil in 1743, it was not until the following year that his elder brother also occupied an important position at the Court of Versailles.

In the year 1744 it was probably in a great measure owing to the fact that the younger d'Argenson thought that he could direct his brother as he might wish, that the Marquis René Louis de Voyer d'Argenson assumed the important post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. The cunning younger brother thought that he would only have a simpleton to deal with in this straightforward, single-minded man. With his own tortuous methods, he was incapable of realising that it was in his very honesty that there lay his brother's strength. It was, however, a strength so great that by it at one time the Marquis controlled Louis XV., and led the King into the paths of reason, in spite of the strongly opposing influences of the Court and the Royal Family.

While clearly seeing the faults of the administration, he came to the Ministry with a head full of Utopian

schemes in advance of his time. One can judge of his ideas by a few extracts from his journal.

"*September 21st*, 1745.—The hatred of all Europe against the King of Prussia and the fear which the King's Council has had for M. de Belle-Isle have crowned the Grand Duke Emperor. [Francis of Lorraine, Grand Duke of Tuscany, husband of Maria Theresa.]

"*September 28th.*—In the King's Council, mistrust, suspicion are fanatical passions. Every one judges his neighbour by his own measure. I have a bad opinion of those suspicious people who deny the existence of pure virtue. My *confrères* are the sweetest and most honest scoundrels I have ever known.

"*October 20th.*—The King resembles the Almighty, who sees all, listens, and never says a word. It is true that he lets off occasionally a few thunder-bolts, some influences, but no concert, no direction.

"The secondary causes are mistresses, and antagonistic. Hence trouble and confusion. M. le Dauphin is at the same time dissipated and a man of retirement.

"*October 30th.*—I found upon arrival in the Ministry our kingdom governed by a policy of vulgarians. No great ideas; there was a horror of justice, a passion for suspicions, an inclination to treason under the pretence of cleverness.

"Superiority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs above the others. Herein lies the superexcellence of my charge over the other departments. I say to them: You—you will keep the money—you the navy—you the troops, and I the reputation of the State; above everything its reputation for probity and good faith. In behaving thus all will go well. And if it be true that the fault of our Government is that each one works for

himself, only speaking up for his own charge, and that under a King of middling solicitude this fault has its dangers, I will do like the rest. I will work for my greatest and best reputation, by which I shall be able to do without all the rest—troops, Royal ships, and even money for the external affairs.

"*On the Abuse of Councils.*—Consultations are good for the government of a State; councils are pernicious for it. I mean by consultations when a chief has under him some good advisers with whom he consults, with decisive authority on his side and subordination on that of the counsellor—what is called a consultative and not a deliberative voice.

"On the other hand, the Councils of equals are only useful to stir one another up to fear and uncertainty. Nothing but very indifferent work will ever be the result of a community of workers at the same job.

"If I were the King's favourite, or only the most accredited of my colleagues, as was Maximilien de Sully to Henri IV., I would persuade His Majesty to think seriously for ten years of paying his debts, to improve his dominions, by means of which after ten years he would be the greatest King on the earth. I would further persuade His Majesty to reside in Paris, to live in the Tuileries or the Louvre as they are now, while hunting out all the people who have got no business there. In this there would be a great saving.

"The Ministers would live in their own homes, in Paris, the nearest possible to the Louvre. They could have their lodging allowance in cash, and their offices close at hand. Each one should have a cabinet in the Louvre, with an ante-room where they could be found at certain hours before or after the Council.

"A Commission should be formed to consider upon the retrenchment of expenses at the Court. Down with the hunting establishments, the stable greatly reduced. The Gardes now in Barracks to be sent off into garrison, serving only in detachments. The Royal houses could be well kept up, especially Versailles; and the King might go from time to time to pass a week at his various country-houses, Fontainebleau, Versailles, Marly, la Muette, Choisy, Compiègne, in a quiet way with a picked company, but without dragging after him either Ministers or Council.

"If only one could during this time continue the impost of the tenth, even the fifth, what improvements!—what reimbursements! Yearly one would make known to the public the progress of the acquittal of debts, and of the charges of the State. One would pay off the most expensive offices and those of which the venality is most dangerous, and one would tax the financiers for the debts of the State. . . .

"My system of democracy is, that the specie should be improved in value; a Royal and sure bank should be instituted to enjoy many sums without interest. Supposing the debts and charges to amount to two milliards, nothing would be easier than to pay them off in ten years. And in the meantime the King's revenues would increase by the happiness of the people, by the abundance and the circulation which all these reimbursements would procure to the State. During this time the troops could become militia—the ships go to the wood-yards."

Such were some of the Utopian schemes of the Marquis d'Argenson, but he went even further: "One would alienate in perpetuity all the Crown domains, burn the

title-deeds, permit the reimbursement of all feudality of the properties, and a hundred other things."

Thus he entered into the Ministry with the fixed idea of re-establishing the reputation of that good faith which ought never to have left the nation; saying that France ought to prefer a good reputation to any new acquisitions, that she ought only to aim at a noble preponderance in Europe which would procure her repose and dignity. The Marquis maintained that all the political maxims of the country should consist in strict laws of morality and generosity. To lift up the weak, to abase tyrants, to do good, to prevent evil, to do to others as one would be done by, to reign in the civilised world only by justice and good works—such was his code. It seemed to him that, by such a line of conduct, France would attain to a height and condition of abundance hitherto little seen in the world. Filled with these ideas, hitherto unknown, d'Argenson was not careful enough to conceal them. Neither the century nor the nation was accustomed to anything of the kind. Thus he was only too easily misunderstood, while that which he advanced, after profound reflection, as being for the good of the country, was only considered as the sign of a want of cleverness or ability in his judgment.

Whatever others may have thought, the Marquis boldly carried his ideas for the improvement of the condition of France so far as to urge Louis XV. to make peace, or to stand merely on a defensive warfare, even before the battle of Fontenoy. The circumstances of that battle, which for quite two hours was a lost one for France, merely confirmed him in his views. "Where," he asked, "should we have been if it had been lost entirely?" He with his brother the War

Minister were both present with the King during his campaigns in 1745 and 1746. Therefore he was able to judge of matters from personal knowledge when in the former year he advised the King to hold on to what he had obtained, but to seek for no more. At the same time he was very displeased with the fact that twenty thousand men were withdrawn from the Prince de Conti in Italy in order to secure a triumph for Louis in Flanders, at the price of sacrificing both the French and Prussian interests everywhere else. The Prince de Conti was obliged to retreat. D'Argenson's words, however, concerning the advantage of defensive war, made little impression on the King, who replied that "it was more ruinous than an offensive one, since one ate up one's own country instead of that of the enemy; moreover," he added, "that the Queen of Hungary could only be directly attacked through the Low Countries, and that it would also frighten the Maritime Powers." By the Maritime Powers England and Holland were understood.

D'Argenson, however, wished not to frighten Holland, but for a firm alliance with that Protestant country, as also with Saxony and Prussia; and, in addition, one with Catholic Piedmont, which would have become the chief power in the free Italy he sought to create, liberated from Austrian influences. The Royal Family, on the other hand, wished for the Catholic alliance of Spain and Austria; with an Italy under the yoke of Spain. Already were the two d'Argensons distinguished, even by the King, as Peace d'Argenson and War d'Argenson, when Louis was seduced into listening to the counsels of the former—to be gained by the hope of peace.

This was at the end of October, 1745. The King

appeared then to be so much in the ascendancy in every direction, whether Flanders, Piedmont, or in Scotland through the Pretender, that there seemed every chance for the success of the plan proposed by M. d'Argenson *de la paix*. This was to detach from the league of the enemies, and to regain for France the secondary Powers, such as Saxony, Piedmont, and Holland.

There was sense in this plan under every aspect. Saxony and Poland being then united under Augustus III., as they had been already under his father Augustus II., d'Argenson sought to make the hitherto elective Monarchy of Poland hereditary in the Saxon line. By this means he hoped to establish a firm combination between the two countries which would enable them to unite and form a barrier against Russia.

With regard to the United States of Holland, a great party in that Republic was both anti-Orange and anti-English in feeling and utterly sick of perpetually being dragged in the wake of Great Britain in all her enterprises for the advantage of the Hanoverian George. That party was only too willing to become friendly with France, should the opportunity arrive.

Concerning Italy, of which Piedmont—that is, the Kingdom of Sardinia—was the strongest factor, the ideas of the Marquis were very fine. He sought to form that which did not come until more than a hundred years later in the days of Garibaldi—an united Italy. This was to be obtained by means of a confederation of the various component parts, under the leadership of the Savoyard King Charles Emanuel and his successors. The Austrian was to be hunted out entirely!

This federation was to be of States equal among themselves, who were to have a common Diet always in

session. The armed guardian of the north was to be Piedmont, to whom was to be given all of Milan .The Infante Don Philip would be compelled in future to resign all pretensions to Milan, notwithstanding that he had already had himself crowned with the ancient iron crown of Lombardy. Venice was also to have a part of Lombardy. Tuscany, freed from its Grand Duke, now just becoming Emperor of Germany, was to revert to its ancient condition of a Republic. The Kingdom of Naples, with Sicily, was to remain under Philip's brother Don Carlos of Spain, who had become its King during the recent War of the Polish Succession.

But every foreign Prince ruling any part of Italy was to be forced to elect between his Italian kingdom or duchy and any other to which he might succeed. He was to swear to make himself an Italian alone, or else abandon Italy entirely. Thus, should Don Carlos succeed to the throne of Spain (as he did eventually, after his half-brother Ferdinand) he could take either Spain or his Neapolitan kingdom, but not hold both.

While a state of war actually existed between France and Sardinia, by a course of clever manœuvres d'Argenson brought the Piedmontese Prince to agree secretly with Louis XV. his nephew to desert Austria and effect this condition of affairs. The emissaries of France went backwards and forwards in disguise, carrying letters in the French King's own handwriting, and M. de Champeaux, an envoy disguised in the dress of an abbé, was actually hidden in Charles Emanuel's palace at Turin when Austrian agents arrived, to ask that Prince to continue to push the war against France more vigorously and to act in combination with the approaching Austrian forces. A preliminary treaty was secretly signed at

Turin. This was followed by a treaty in form, also secret, being signed at Paris, and by this latter the two Kings determined upon an armistice. The nephew and uncle made what d'Argenson called "an equitable division of the States of the house of Austria in Italy." The biggest share was given to the King of Sardinia, a part to Don Philip the son-in-law of Louis XV., the remainder to the Venetians; while the King of Sardinia restored what Genoese territory he had seized to that republic, the firm ally of France, and which had suffered through her fidelity.

All would have gone well if it had not been for the greed of that peace-disturbing element, Elizabeth Farnese, the Princess of Parma who occupied the Spanish throne. For two months and a half she refused to join the alliance or accede to the terms of the Treaty of Turin; and yet by its earlier conditions her son Philip was to have obtained Savoy and the county of Nice. As the French and Spanish forces were all the time besieging Alessandria, which was in the greatest straits, it became very difficult to keep the proposed armistice a secret from Austria, especially as Charles Emanuel did not want Alessandria to fall into the hands of the Spaniards, and, moreover, Austrian agents pointed out to him how to prevent its doing so. "The *Gallispans*" were meanwhile secretly allowing enough food to pass into the citadel of Alessandria to permit the garrison to live from week to week, while d'Argenson, Louis XV., and the King of Sardinia were all three anxiously waiting for Elizabeth Farnese to agree to that which was for her own interests. Meanwhile, to complicate matters still more, an Austrian army was marching on Italy. The Infante, indeed, had not a ghost of a chance of having any establishment at all



From the painting by Nattier. Copyright, W. Mansell & Co.

MADAME MARIE LOUISE ÉLISABETH DE FRANCE, DUCHESS OF PARMA.

before long, unless his mother came to terms. But that she would not see, nor allow her effete husband Philip V. to see either. Spain, indeed, had become presumptuous, and imagined herself a conqueror in Italy on her own account alone, whereas all her successes had been owing to the sacrifices of France on her behalf.

Meanwhile, an old beau, the Bishop of Rennes, was the French Ambassador in Spain, and endeavouring to arrange matters. There he found all the greater difficulty in calming the Queen, as she considered herself outraged from the fact that Don Philip then actually was himself occupying Milan. The greatest marplot was perhaps the young Infanta, Louise Élisabeth de France, Don Philip's wife, in Madrid. Louis XV., on account of this beloved daughter, was very Spanish in his feelings. He felt it hard to withdraw Milan from this daughter and give that duchy to the Savoyard. It is true that Louis was also very discontented with the insolent behaviour of his Spanish relations, whom success had rendered arrogant almost beyond all bearing. He was even very dissatisfied with the Infanta herself. She was not content to trust to her father alone, but was intriguing with Versailles in general. Maurepas, always intimate with Spain, the Duc de Noailles, whom Elizabeth Farnese had flattered, and the Dauphine—all were being worked upon by her in an underhand manner, and Louis knew it. In addition to all this, the King had reason to suppose that the young and handsome Infanta had, in the continued absence of her husband, been indulging in more than an ordinary flirtation with the too gallant Bishop who represented France at Madrid. Being always jealous of his daughters, this circumstance touched Louis to the quick.

Ever a proficient in geography, it had been Louis himself who with his own hand had traced out the plan of the new partition of Italy by which his son-in-law was to be deprived of a great slice of his share. Everything had, with the map before him, been first sketched out by Louis, and then definitely arranged between him and d'Argenson. The rest of the Council had not been taken into the confidence of the pair of plotters for peace. In some way, however, the sly Maurepas had contrived to ferret out the details of the plan, and lost no time in informing the Spanish Ambassador, Campo Florido by name. He rushed to Versailles and wept aloud in the King's cabinet. According to d'Argenson, "One could hear him howling." The Queen, Madame Henriette, the Court now all surrounded the King weeping and wailing; with woebegone faces and reproachful looks they assailed him in every corner. But, backed by the faithful Minister, Louis remained firm. In Madrid the foolish Royal Family covered their heads with ashes also, but did not forget to rage at the same time. The Duque d'Huescar, one of the greatest grandees and greatest fops in Spain, was sent off post-haste to Paris to protest. He also secretly endeavoured to bribe d'Argenson, by promising him the rank of Grandee of Spain of the highest class if he would only break off the negotiations with Turin.

"Of this despicable offer," says d'Argenson, "I never made any mention to the King." Needless to say, that worthy Minister stuck to his guns and refused to accept any modifications in the treaty personally, saying that anything of that sort would be for Spain to negotiate direct with the King of Sardinia, but that, as for the King of France, he had passed his Royal word and signed definitely. D'Argenson told d'Huescar

further that His Majesty himself had drawn up the treaty with excellent sense, and that it was a case of at the same time banishing once for all both the Germans and the fatal wars which ruined Italy.

Meanwhile, the Austrians were advancing rapidly, and the King of Sardinia, becoming more and more uneasy, wrote that he no longer knew how to continue to play the comedy with his allies. The Maréchal de Maillebois, grandson of the great Colbert, was commanding the French forces in Italy, and his son, the Comte de Maillebois, was married to d'Argenson's daughter. Him d'Argenson sent off to Turin, to make definite arrangements for the armistice between France and Piedmont, whether the Spaniards came in or no; and with instructions to drive out the Austrians in combination with the Maréchal de Maillebois.

But the Comte arrived too late! On March 10th, 1746, he reached Rivoli, near Turin. Two of the principal Ministers from the Piedmontese capital arrived to meet him, in company with the Sieur de Champeaux, the trusty envoy of d'Argenson hidden in the palace of the King of Sardinia. They came to say that the time for arrangement was passed, that the Prince von Lichtenstein was in the palace, and, in the following night, the Piedmontese army was about to march to relieve, or at all events help, Alessandria. The Count was politely told to leave the States of Piedmont quicker than he had come. He could go to his father, who was with his army at Tortona, if he liked; for he would be too late to prevent the steps about to be taken. These steps were to surprise M. de Montal, a French Lieutenant-General, with nine regiments at Asti. De Montal had been at Asti all the winter without taking the trouble

to entrench his position. He was forced to capitulate with all his force. Maillebois, marching to assist Montal, arrived too late, especially as the Spanish refused to lend him the aid of their cavalry. Two days after the capture of Montal's force a messenger arrived at Versailles from the King and Queen of Spain to say that they had changed their minds and would agree to the treaty with Sardinia! In the meantime their son Don Philip was shut up in Parma, and only escaped by a miracle.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Family, Pompadour, Voltaire, and Peace

1746—1748

AFTER the surprise of M. de Montal at Asti, the Spaniards soon had cause to regret that they had made such a foolish outcry about the treaty with Sardinia, only to agree when it was too late. Their armies were defeated everywhere. Nor was the Maréchal de Maillebois any more successful. Instead of reinforcing that General, Louis once more formed a grand army for himself for parade purposes through the Low Countries, both Flanders and Holland, whither he proceeded early in 1746; while Maillebois, with whom the Spaniards would not loyally co-operate, was driven back step by step into the territory of the faithful Genoese, whose capital was soon invaded by the Austrians.

Except for the short time that he passed in Flanders, Louis devoted the greater part of the year to fêtes, organised by the energy of Madame de Pompadour, and towards its close two circumstances of importance took place. First, the young Spanish wife of the Dauphin died, and then Philip V. of Spain, broken-hearted and disgusted at the results of his wife's Italian policy, died also.

Thus the year 1746 closed with a new King,

Ferdinand VI., upon the throne of Spain. He was the son of the Savoyard first wife of Philip V., and cared nothing for his stepmother's plans for the glorification of her offspring.

Behold Elizabeth Farnese accordingly at last discredited, and able no longer to upset the peace of Europe! Before finally disappearing from the scene, she, however, aided by the Infanta, wife of Don Philip, made one more determined effort to disturb that of France. Throughout the year 1746 she had herself been in a great measure the cause of the disasters which befell the Maréchal de Maillebois, by endeavouring to conduct the operations of the Spanish troops from Madrid in such a manner as upon every occasion to act in opposition to his well-thought-out plans. She now sought to supply the Dauphin with another wife.

Well might the Abbé Régnier write:

> Le destin de l'Espagne est toujours de nous nuire,
> Et le siècle à venir aura peine à juger
> S'il nous a plus coûté de la vouloir détruire
> Ou de la vouloir protéger.

The wife whom Elizabeth sought to impose upon France was her daughter Antonia, sister of the deceased Dauphine. This Antonia was a little black imp—a regular dwarf with a dangerous and intriguing disposition like her mother. Her sister, who had only lived for eighteen months after her marriage, had assumed a considerable ascendancy over the mind of the Dauphin. She had been a very handsome young woman, who, although having red hair, had endeavoured to conceal that fact from her husband, red hair being looked upon as a disgrace in Spain. The young Prince, despite the loving messages sent to him on behalf of Antonia, was not

inclined hurriedly to replace his brilliantly complexioned wife by her swarthy sister.

Nor, when Louis found that the Queen and Infanta were acting in a double-faced way—writing affectionately to himself while stirring the Dauphin at the same time up against him—did he incline to the proposed new Spanish marriage. He still had at his elbow, as his Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Marquis d'Argenson, who had a theory, formed in a great measure from his observations upon the Queen of Spain's own conduct.

This theory was that far more evil had been wrought in kingdoms by the ascendancy over Kings of their legitimate wives than from the ascendancy of mistresses. He mistrusted any Princess having anything to do with Spain, and advised the King with regard to his reply. Louis acted very firmly under his Minister's advice, saying that there was such a horror in France against the idea of an incestuous connection that he could not bring himself to agree to the proposed match for the Dauphin with his wife's sister.

This remark may not have seemed to have come with a very good grace from a King who had himself lived with four sisters of the de Nesle family. It was, however, as good an excuse for a refusal as another, even although the people of France and, according to the very careful Duc de Luynes, the Queen herself, were at this very time offended at the excessive degree of intimacy existing between the King and the too-obedient Madame Henriette.

Elizabeth Farnese was furious, and threatened war in the name of her stepson Ferdinand VI.; but, although both she and the Infanta quoted this new ruler of Spain for the furtherance of their designs, he knew little about

their intrigues, nor did he care to know more. Thus, so far as France was concerned, the dowager Queen of Spain was forced to close her turbulent career of thirty years of agitation by sitting down under a stinging rebuff, which she well merited.

D'Argenson meanwhile was looking out for a wife for the Dauphin elsewhere. The Spanish Princess just dead having left no son, he was particularly anxious to select one who gave promise of fecundity. He decided upon Maria Josepha, the younger Princess of the house of Saxony, with which State the marriage would bring about a cessation of hostilities. The grandfather of this Princess, Augustus II., was credited with being the parent of three hundred odd children, and her sister, married to Don Carlos, annually brought a child into the world.

Except for the conduct of the King of Sardinia, whose troops had recently fired upon the Maréchal de Maillebois during his retirement, it is probable that a Piedmontese Princess would have been selected. For the Queen was very averse to the Saxon marriage, while the brothers Pâris, who governed Madame de Pompadour and who came from Dauphiné, had a natural predilection for Savoy, on whose borders they had been born. There were in fact advances made by Sardinia. The King spoke of the matter to his Council, saying that there could not, unfortunately, be any question of a marriage with a Princess of the house of Savoy, "since a passport would be necessary for the bride."

There was a great Savoyard lady in Paris, the Princesse de Carignan, who seems to have acted throughout all these years as the semi-spy, semi-diplomatic agent of Sardinia. The Sieur de Montgardin was also

the accredited agent of the Piedmontese Court at Versailles, even during the existence of a state of war with France.

To these two persons d'Argenson could not forego the pleasure of emphasising the fact of the mistake that King Charles Emanuel had made in being in such a hurry to break off his Treaty of Turin. To Madame de Carignan, the Foreign Minister, in announcing the rupture of all matrimonial negotiations, remarked that "our flirtations were only received with bullets."

Montgardin the Marquis kept by his side the whole of an evening in the garden of the Palace of the Luxembourg. In his own words: "To him I said that his master was the most unskilful Prince in all Europe: he had lost all by breaking the treaty of 1745, and had come by nothing since but injuries and expenses in the place of Milan, which he would have had by waiting only a week longer for the consent of Spain. And now again he was losing, by his own fault, the most brilliant match in Europe for his daughter."

The marriage of the Dauphin to the Princess of Saxony was the signal for the downfall of the Marquis d'Argenson. He had to the last kept the matter an entire secret between himself and the King, in spite of the repeated questionings by Maurepas of His Majesty and himself. His enemies, among whom must be counted the Dauphin, and the Queen, so favourable to Spain, took the opportunity of the very day of the marriage at Dresden to persuade the King to dismiss his faithful Minister just when his credit with his master seemed at its greatest height. This greatness had brought upon his head the jealousy and hatred of all. The Dauphin himself did not enter willingly into the

new matrimonial engagement, and showed ill-humour to the Minister when he took him the necessary *procuration* to sign. Afterwards, however, he soon learned to love his new wife well. As d'Argenson had anticipated, this marriage proved very fruitful. The Saxon Princess was the mother of Louis XVI., Louis XVIII., Charles X., Madame Clotilde, Princesse de Savoie, and Madame Elizabeth.

M. de Paulmy, the Marquis d'Argenson's son, had been sent with the Duc de Richelieu to Dresden to fetch the bride, where he learned his father's disgrace, at which the whole Court of Saxony was distressed when the news arrived.

The order of the Black Eagle was offered to the Marquis, but he declined it, not approving that Ministers should wear any orders save those of the King whom they served. Thereupon a magnificent service of Dresden porcelain, worth more than twenty thousand crowns, was sent to the outgoing Minister of Foreign Affairs. It had been ordered expressly for him, and every piece was perfect when it arrived three months after his dismissal.

D'Argenson took it to the King and insisted that His Majesty should take it for one of his country-houses. The King, however, after some hesitation, refused, and made the Marquis keep it himself; for if disgraced as a Minister, his name still remained as high as ever as a man. Indeed, he still retained the ministerial rank of a Secretary of State, although replaced by a scheming and unworthy creature of his own, M. de Puysieux, in the post from which he had been dismissed—for too much honesty. D'Argenson had some time previously regretted having lent a helping hand to Puysieux. His

son M. de Paulmy, who was present at the celebration of the marriage at Dresden, also received a magnificent present worth ten thousand livres. It consisted of a snuff-box set in diamonds, the box being of most exquisite design.

The Dauphin, when married for the second time, did not find his father any better disposed towards him than he had been previously. He and the so-called devout party of *les honnêtes gens*, headed by the unscrupulous Madame de Ventadour, therefore took advantage of the King's growing infatuation for Madame Henriette to push this retiring girl forward—make her come out of her shell and take bold steps that she would never have taken alone. By these, the party of the Dauphin were able to gain various objects which they had in view, and which would never have been obtained if demanded by that Prince himself, who played a most unworthy part.

Madame Henriette now gave in her apartments little suppers to the King, while he made a habit of installing himself at his ease with this daughter, who submitted to all his caprices while never making any complaint. The King commenced to distinguish Madame Henriette in a way to make Madame de Pompadour feel herself quite eclipsed at the Court, as indeed was the Queen almost eclipsed also.

Although at Versailles this Princesse had need of nothing, her doting father made her an allowance of eight hundred thousand livres yearly, which was four times what he allowed to Pompadour. He also created for the retiring and unobtrusive girl of twenty a "household," with a large establishment of ladies and grand officers. Henriette did not, however, forget her mother

when she had to this extent become her father's favourite, but contrived to force the King to treat the Queen with more consideration than formerly. Thus on New Year's Day, 1747, Marie Lesczynska received the *étrennes* of the King, while the Marquise de Pompadour was neglected and had no gift. The Queen, however, so says de Luynes, became fatigued of being compelled to submit to the kiss of ceremony from her daughters.

It was no doubt owing to the representations of the humble Henriette, working, as she thought, in the interests of her sister the Infanta, that that bugbear of Spain, the Marquis d'Argenson was hunted out of office in February, 1747. His departure brought about quite a revolution of policy. He had in a recent conference assembled at Bréda, in Holland, endeavoured once more to patch up matters with Sardinia, making use of Holland as mediator. France, owing to the family influences, now turned a cold shoulder to Prussia, Holland, and Piedmont altogether. But, even before his fall, the neglect to follow his advice had been regretted, for Provence was invaded by ruthless Austrian bands after the failure of the negotiations of Turin. Had it not been for the valiant uprising of the Genoese against the Austrians, who had pitilessly pillaged their city with every circumstance of extortion, France would have been completely ruined in the south.

In another matter—namely, the question of Holland—it became plain how wise had been the counsels of d'Argenson. While the Minister of Foreign Affairs had been cultivating the party favourable to France and opposed to the English and Orange faction—which was, in fact, the party that approved a continuance of republican institutions and opposed to any autocratic

form of government—Louis had caused Holland to be invaded. This had not been a difficult matter after the dismantling of the line of frontier fortresses lying between Austrian Flanders and the seven Dutch provinces which had united in 1579. Then the ten provinces of Flanders had remained Roman Catholic and under Spanish rule, to revert to Austria, and in later days to become Belgium.

These frontier fortresses had been known as the Dutch Barrier, but from the first invasion of Holland by Louis XIV. in 1672 France had taken a delight in repeatedly destroying this Barrier. Previous to that date —namely, in 1648—Spain at the Treaty of Westphalia had acknowledged the independence of Holland, which had already been practically independent for seventy years.

The first French invasion had resulted in the establishment of a Stadtholder, who had been William of Orange, descended from William the Silent of the house of Nassau-Dillenberg. He took his title of Prince of Orange from a small principality in the south-east of France, acquired by the Nassau family in 1570. It lapsed with the death of William, who had become William III. of England in 1702, and was ceded to France by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. After his death the collateral line of Nassau-Dietz, which only remained established in two little provinces in Friesland, still by the treaty retained the title of Princes of Orange. Holland, however, reverted to a Republic after the death of the ruler of both England and Holland.

When the fourth instance of wanton French aggression since 1672 took place in 1746, it had the same result upon the Dutch as had had the first invasion of

Louis XIV. Holland demanded a Stadtholder once more, and imposed upon the Republic a very undistinguished successor to the great William the Silent and his various descendants. He was William IV. of Orange, and of the Nassau-Dietz line. This Prince had neither boldness nor personal appearance to recommend him, having had no experience of the profession of arms and being somewhat misshapen in body. The interest of England had nevertheless elevated him to a quasi-Royal position, he being the son-in-law of George II. and brother-in-law of the British commander at Fontenoy, the Duke of Cumberland.

By the establishment of this new Stadtholder, England had therefore much more closely united the ties between Holland and Great Britain, which latter country could now rely upon the Dutch implicitly for mutual action against France. This was the sole result of the imprudent attack by Louis XV. upon the United States, who for the time being virtually lost their position either as an independent land or sea power, being at the beck and call of George II.

France felt this position, and in 1747 commenced humbly to sue for peace with the allies, upon the condition of returning all her conquests. She was not, however, listened to, whereupon the Maréchal de Saxe gained the bloody victory of Lauffeldt, took Bergen-op-Zoom, and threatened Maestricht, the finest city in Holland.

The taking of Bergen-op-Zoom was accompanied by the cruel sack of that place, so bitter had the war become. Holland was terrified, and trembled for Maestricht. She already saw herself in imagination reduced to the cruel measures which she had been compelled

to adopt in the reign of Louis XIV. for self-defence. Then both the sea and fresh-water dykes had been cut and the whole country around Amsterdam flooded, including the suburbs of that flourishing city. The country remained flooded for two years from June 20th, 1672, entailing untold misery upon the inhabitants. This drastic measure, however, even in winter time saved Holland. When the Duke of Luxembourg attempted to take The Hague, he found the ice breaking everywhere under his horses' feet, and was with difficulty able to retreat to the province of Utrecht.

In 1747 Holland was fortunately spared the necessity of reducing her flat domains to the condition of a vast lake. England suddenly became pacific; having destroyed nearly all the French warships, she did not wish to see the war continued merely in order that Louis might continue his career of conquest in Holland.

Every one was tired of the war, most had forgotten what it was all about, what had been its cause of origin. Austria, the Pragmatic Sanction—to abase the former, to enforce the latter, had been those primary causes; and what was the result? With exception of the loss of Silesia to Prussia, Austria was stronger than ever. The Queen of Hungary had become the Empress of Germany; in Italy, Bohemia—everywhere except in the Low Countries—she was supreme.

How had matters fared with the Infante Don Philip? The French Infanta, his wife, Louise Élisabeth, elder sister of Henriette, had seen her Italian establishment, her Royalty of Lombardy, fall to the ground. She had no longer anything left—not even hope. Should her brother-in-law Don Carlos succeed the weakly Ferdinand upon the throne of Spain, he would not now resign his

kingdom of the two Sicilies to Philip, for he had two sons of his own, and intended to make the Neapolitan kingdom over to the second of these.

Thus, after sharing with Elizabeth Farnese the reigning power in Madrid, after having possessed Milan and hoped for Naples, between three kingdoms the French Infanta found herself thrown flat without one. There was nothing left for her to do but to think of returning to France, where she had heard how the power of Madame Henriette was increasing.

With her mother the Queen, with Madame de Pompadour, Louise Élisabeth was becoming more than uneasy at this ascendancy which was effacing her own old supremacy over her unreliable father Louis XV. As for Pompadour, from the year 1746 she had seen herself sinking. Power in the State she had certainly acquired by that year, but both her health and beauty were declining. Her constant efforts to amuse the King, to keep him interested in her, were wearing her out. Performing the duties of a Minister during the day, when the evening came she was compelled to enact the part of an actress, a ballet-girl, an opera-singer, a dancer in vaudeville. While spitting blood and put upon a milk diet, no repose was possible for the unfortunate woman, if she would keep that which one of the preceding favourites had termed "her office."

In spite of her unheard-of efforts, the Marquise only now succeeded in boring the King. He yawned when she performed in a ballet, and said that he preferred comedy. When she acted in comedy, he fell asleep.

In Paris she knew herself to be looked upon with mistrust and scorn, and at Versailles the Dauphin and the King's young daughters, especially the effervescent



From the painting by Nattier *Copyright, W. Mansell & Co.*

MADAME HENRIETTA OF FRANCE.

Adélaïde, lost no opportunity of putting an affront upon their father's mistress. They persuaded the King that she was unhealthy, consumptive, that it was unwise for him to live with her, as he too might become *poitrinaire*. Madame du Hausset, Pompadour's confidential waiting-woman, says, in her Memoirs, that although, just as a make-believe to deceive the world, Louis continued to go to her room at night, he slept apart, on a sofa.

By the end of 1747 Madame de Pompadour had become so jealous of the influence of both Madame Henriette and Madame Adélaïde, that she persuaded the King to recall their younger sister, Madame Victoire, from the convent at Fontevrault, where she was being educated. The King took to Victoire at once, and made a great fuss about the fourteen-year-old girl, for whom he made enormous expenses, while showering honours upon her. While Henriette suffered in silence, Adélaïde became furious with jealousy, not upon her own account, but upon her sister's, when she saw the youthful newcomer taking all the honours of the Court from Henriette, who was now twenty-one. Adélaïde was only fifteen, but she made such violent scenes that her father had to listen to her and send Victoire away from the grand apartments he had given her, up to a more humble abode on the second story. There she was relegated to the duties of looking after her two little sisters.

The Infanta, Louise Élisabeth—a woman with a vicious mind—had meanwhile dreamed of another sort of vengeance, whereby she might kill Madame Henriette by ridicule. She well knew Voltaire's play *Œdipe*, which, written as an attack upon the Regent's incestuous

connection with his daughter the unbridled Duchesse de Berry, had been rewarded by that easy-going Prince with a pension, instead of the Bastille, for the author. She now induced Voltaire to write another tragedy with the same intention. The piece was called *Sémiramis*, and it hit at Madame Henriette, not directly, but round the corner, through other persons well known. Through Pompadour, the poet had contrived to reach Versailles as a gentleman of the chamber, and had been also appointed historiographer of France. But Voltaire became alarmed even before he had finished writing the play. He was in bad odour at Versailles, where he had not at all succeeded as a courtier. Presuming upon his position as a famous man of letters, he had attempted a slight familiarity with the King—who hated men of letters. His Majesty froze the cynical poet with a glance without replying when, after the performance of a piece glorifying Louis, he confidently approached the Royal box and asked, "Is Trajan content?" Pompadour, by whose credit he was there, was too anxious for her own position to back Voltaire up, whereupon he retired to Sceaux. There, in the Court of the spiteful little Condé, the old Duchesse du Maine, who to her last hour plotted against the Court of Versailles, *Sémiramis* was finished.

It was completed just at the time that "the head of the family Council," as d'Argenson calls Henriette, was being moved by the King into a grander and more royal abode than she had hitherto occupied. Voltaire became frightened, and wrote from Lunéville, whither he had retired, to stop the representation of *Sémiramis*. Madame de Pompadour, however, wished the piece to be proceeded with; for she imagined that by making

the King himself the protector of the tragedy, the hidden allusions would not be understood, or at all events could not be applied.

It was first played at Paris on August 29th, 1748, with no ill effects to any one. The author, staying with Stanislas, the ex-King of Poland, at Lunéville, had shown the play to the Queen's father; but no sooner was it performed than he became thrown into a terrible state of alarm lest it should be parodied, as was customary in those days. The danger was that the parody should too plainly reveal its real intention. Such a parody was indeed written. No doubt by the advice of the good-natured and not too straight-laced Stanislas, whose mistress the Marquise de Boufflers protected men of letters, Voltaire now wrote wild letters to the Duchesse de Luynes, to the Cardinal Quirini, and six letters to the Queen herself. In these he implored that the production of the parody should be prevented. Marie Lesczynska, however, replied very coldly, that "a parody was customary." Her Majesty was not just then on such good terms with Madame Henriette that she wished either her husband or her daughter to be spared. What the Queen would not do, however, was effected by Madame de Pompadour. Very alarmed herself, she contrived, in September, 1748, to have the performance of the parody stopped at the last minute.

Already during that month were the terms of a peace dishonourable for France being negotiated. The Maréchal de Saxe before Maestricht was moaning and groaning aloud, writing and begging that no peace should be made before the fall of the important Dutch city would make better terms easily obtainable. Louis, however, replying

that there was no more money for the war, launched into extravagance upon a series of fêtes.

The devout party, the family party at the Court also, who had always hated the war and wished for the success of Austria, hurried the King on to throw all the fruits of his conquests into the fire; persuaded him to get rid, as fast as possible, of all that for which hundreds of thousands of French lives had been uselessly sacrificed. All France was indignant already before peace was signed at Aix-la-Chapelle, but few were found who dared to express aloud their disgust or indignation. Voltaire, however, had the temerity to utter a protest, and, with an entire want of tact, he made it take the form of some very ill-judged verses to the King and Pompadour combined, as though the master and the mistress were upon an equal footing. These verses ended with the words, "Et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes."

These lines, arriving when the shameful treaty was all ready to be signed, wounded all the more because of the excellent advice of Voltaire to the King to keep *his* conquests. No one about the Court had dared to express the irritation which had been secretly felt when *Sémiramis* was produced; but now—Mesdames de France were furious. The Princesses rushed to the King with their party and cried shame! "The State and the King were lost," they said, "if a man of his household—his servant—dared to give him advice and, moreover, impudently to mix up His Majesty's name with that of Pompadour!"

That lady made herself very humble for a time and endeavoured to conciliate the Princesses. The Queen, being very irritated with her daughters, had pity upon Pompadour, and kindly connived with the King when

he sought to lift up the unhappy woman from her condition of abasement. She was appointed to the post of Superintendent of the Queen's Household; and Her Majesty took particular care to receive the Marquise with kindness and consideration when she came to pay her respects upon her appointment.

By the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, signed October 18th, 1748, France restored a whole kingdom—the Low Countries—to Austria, and also signed away to Great Britain the future Empire of India, which had been lost to Dupleix by the restoration of Madras. England, however, restored her conquests made from France across the seas, which included Louisbourg and Cape Breton, in what was then called Acadia, but is now Nova Scotia.

The wording of the treaty, however, in all that concerned America, was so vague and badly expressed as to permit of a good excuse for British aggression again before long in those regions. There, indeed, the war between the British and French colonists can scarcely be said to have ever ceased; and thus the inter-colonial disturbances soon had paved the way for what was known as the Seven Years' War.

In France there was the greatest discontent at the terms of the peace. The King of Prussia was, however, relieved by its terms from the fear of an invasion by a force of thirty-seven thousand Russians, who, in alliance with the maritime Powers and Austria, had been slowly approaching his dominions. With the peace, this army commenced a gradual retreat by way of Bohemia and Moravia, where it was proposed, on account of the bad weather, that they should retire into winter quarters. The object with which this army of Russians had advanced remained a subject of speculation in France,

where some thought that what they had really been aiming at was the coercion of the Empire, intending to force the Diet to elect Joseph, the young son of Maria Theresa, as King of the Romans.

All that Spain gained by the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was a little establishment for Don Philip, that of the Duchies of Parma, Guastalla, and Piacenza. Of this d'Argenson remarks, "It is an establishment only worthy of a Pope's bastard, to whom originally it was given." But that Parmesan Princess, Don Philip's mother, only had herself to thank for her disappointment.

CHAPTER XXV

A Vengeance for Madame de Pompadour

1749

NEVER were the internal affairs of France in a more distracted condition than from the close of hostilities in 1748, by the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, until the official recommencement of war on January 23rd, 1755; before which latter date hostilities with England had really existed for upwards of two years in America.

Madame de Pompadour was practically the principal Minister, and the cause of all the trouble was the condition of affairs at Versailles. It consisted there in the prevalence of the petticoat—the King being ruled by some of the Ministers through Madame de Pompadour's influence, and by the Dauphin and clergy through the inordinate affection of Louis for his daughters, the Infanta, Henriette, and Adélaïde.

In Paris the people were so discontented by the terms of the peace that one fish-wife, quarrelling with another, flung at her enemy the words, "Tu es bête comme la paix!" which well expressed the popular feeling.

There was already great destitution among the poorer classes by the end of 1748, and while this distress continued to increase steadily, the expenditure at the

Court also increased, which circumstance added much to the discontent of the people.

On the occasion of the fireworks to celebrate the peace, although the crowds thronged to the Quai Pelletier, their faces showed no sign of joy, and hardly any one cried *Vive le roi!* Owing to the crush, there was great mortality among the people, between two and three hundred being drowned in the Seine or severely injured.

What, however, was worse, was the behaviour of the soldiers of the Gardes Françaises, a supposed *corps d'élite* who had by no means distinguished themselves at Dettingen or Fontenoy. They now distinguished themselves by the atrocity of their behaviour. Taking advantage of the confusion to pounce upon the young girls of the *bourgeoisie*, they dragged them off and ravished their victims. Some of them they kept in concealment until, tired of their charms, they are supposed to have murdered them. When the girls were being dragged off screaming, the brutal soldiers exclaimed to any offering to interfere, "*C'est ma gueuse!*" and threatened those who interposed so that they were in terror of their lives, and glad to escape themselves while leaving the women to their fate.

After the awful catastrophe, sooner or later many of the poor young women sadly made their way home again, after being dishonoured. But many parents never knew if their daughters had been drowned at first, or been the victims of the ruffianly Gardes Françaises and drowned later, as they were never seen again. A large number of corpses, chiefly of women, were taken out of the river as far down as Saint-Cloud for days after the disaster.

These disorders were laid by the people to the malig-

nance and malice of those who governed them, the *bourgeoisie* being in the condition of mind ready to think any evil of its masters; but those at the Court cared little as to what the lower orders thought about them. At Versailles, where woman's honour was held cheap, and whence the fiat went forth for the death of thousands of men, the intrigues of the different Ministers or courtiers, or the last ribald verses against Madame de Pompadour, were themes considered worthy of much more attention than a mere popular calamity.

The most important party about the King consisted of the brothers Pâris, M. de Puysieux, and the Comte de Saint-Séverin, all closely allied with Madame de Pompadour; with, in addition, the Comte d'Argenson, who constantly played a double part between the Queen and Jesuits on one side, and the Marquise on the other. He continued to hold his post of Minister of War and to become more powerful for years after his brother lost his office. On the side opposed to Pompadour was Maurepas, who now had the Ministry of Marine, the King's Household, and one or two minor posts. He was in close union with the Princesses, and strongly suspected of being the author of some of the *Poissonnades*, the disgraceful songs about the Marquise. She always said that she feared that he would poison her, as he had Madame de Châteauroux, and did not take any pains to disguise her dislike of this Minister and his *bons-mots* and satires. Another Minister with whom the King's mistress existed on terms of apparent friendship was M. de Machault, the Contrôleur-Général des Finances. Whether she actually liked him or not is doubtful, but at all events she refrained from abusing him to the King as she did both his favourite Maurepas and the Comte

d'Argenson; although with the latter she worked well, while rightly mistrusting him, for he was not of her party of the *cabinets*.

The Maréchal Duc de Richelieu was probably the most important courtier who was not also a Minister. When he returned to the Court after the war, he behaved in a singular manner, while seeking to ingratiate himself as deeply into the King's good graces as he had been in the days of, that mistress of his own appointment, the Duchesse de Châteauroux. "He has butted against the mistress, against the favourites, against the Ministers, and has got on bad terms with both parties, the Ministry and *les cabinets*. The King would not receive a mistress at his hands on any account, even if he presented the most beautiful in creation. He is warned that it would only be as a means of governing him as he used to be in the days of Madame de Châteauroux. Thus all doors are closed to him—that is not the way to succeed" (d'Argenson). Not long after we find Richelieu, however, changing his tactics. He then not only becomes the warm friend of Pompadour, but apparently as high as ever in the favour of Louis XV.

The Comte de Saint-Séverin, or Severino, mentioned above, was an Italian by birth who had contrived to be employed in high diplomatic positions in the service of France. He was closely allied with Pompadour, and was the envoy who conducted the negotiations for the peace at Aix-la-Chapelle. Of this peace, it was generally said that "England bought the peace at Choisy, and it cost sixteen millions." That was tantamount to saying that Pompadour had been paid for the peace, and with the King's knowledge and connivance—he was supposed

to have shared with her the price of his country's dishonour. M. de Saint-Séverin, who had been to England to arrange the matter of the establishment of Don Philip in Parma, Guastalla, and Piacenza, was also credited with having arranged that the pension of a million livres, formerly paid by England to Cardinal Dubois and then to the Marquise de Prie, should be continued to Madame de Pompadour.

Saint-Séverin was a man of a singularly ferocious temper; indeed, he was supposed at times to be half crazy, as some of his pithy remarks would seem to betoken. One day, among a very distinguished company, when he was making his bows upon being received as Chevalier of the grand Ordre du Saint-Esprit, he was asked if he was not frightened of the public. He replied, "I have never known that sensation of fear of the public. I have always looked upon the public as a bench!"

He was said to have hanged Fontauban, a spy who was suspected of having intended to deliver Louis XV. into the hands of the English. Saint-Séverin said, "Yes, it was I who had him hanged, and I would like in a similar manner to hang half of the human race. As for the other half, I really do not know what I would do with them."

The horrible songs and verses which in these days after the war appeared in such profusion spared the King no more than they spared the mistress. While vulgar to a degree, many of these were too clever, and showed too intimate a knowledge of affairs at the Court not to have emanated from some source not far removed from the King.

M. de Berryer, who was then Lieutenant de Police, was attacked one day upon the subject by a group of

the *petits maîtres des petits cabinets* in the long corridor at Versailles, whither business had taken him. They told him that the late Police-Lieutenant, d'Argenson, would not have proved himself so supine in discovering the offenders. Had such things happened in the days of Louis XIV., d'Argenson would never have allowed them to escape, but have unearthed the miscreants from the bottom of a well.

Berryer looked the courtiers up and down with a piercing and significant glance, before he replied, "I know my Paris as well as it can be known, but—I do not know Versailles!" The courtiers vanished into thin air.

Besides these vulgar songs, ribald prints appeared. In one of these the King, bared for punishment like a schoolboy, was bound by the Marquise de Pompadour and M. de Puysieux, while various potentates flogged him. Maria Theresa applied the birch; England said, "Give it him hard"; and Holland, "He will give up everything." This was called the print "of the four nations." One ballad, aimed at the Marquise (Mademoiselle Poisson), had a line, "Les cabinets sont dans la bassesse, les poissons viennent de la halle." In short, the publications more than ever resembled the *mazarinades* against Cardinal Mazarin and Queen Anne of Austria, the Spanish wife of Louis XIII. and Regent of France, in the time of the Fronde, just a hundred years earlier.

The King was so much distressed that he fell into a state of melancholy, while open war existed between the Ministry of *les cabinets* and the rest of the Ministry. Maurepas was strongly suspected, and, further, it was imagined that he was being pushed by friendship for the

Queen and the Royal Princesses to continue the attacks against the mistress. Thus the King fell into a great state of uncertainty and indecision how to act. On the one side, he was shown that in retaining the unpopular mistress he was increasing the popular discontent, and, further, that if he sent away the Ministers opposed to Pompadour he would seem to be sacrificing them to the sultana—especially the two longest established. These were the Comte d'Argenson and Maurepas, who were popular since they were supposed to hate the favourite. On the other hand, the King felt that if he sent away Pompadour he would lose also her godfathers, the brothers Pâris, who alone supplied him with money; lose likewise de Puysieux and Saint-Séverin, who, solely supported by the credit of *les cabinets*, were not only devoted to his interests, but useful as a balance of power against the malcontents. Saint-Séverin had meanwhile become a Secretary of State.

Pompadour during this period—acting as First Minister—had more authority and more business to attend to than ever had Cardinal Fleury. Besetting the King, she pushed him and shook him up, while hardly ever leaving him alone. In the days of Fleury he scarcely had passed an hour a day in his cabinet, but Pompadour, telling Louis that it was for the good of his health, constantly kept his Royal nose down to the grindstone. She contrived to persuade the King that he would keep away melancholy thoughts by constant work; but, in reality, her object was, by keeping the master thus under her supervision, to prevent him from being able to run the Government without her.

In vain M. de Puysieux ventured to tell the Marquise

that she mixed herself too much in affairs of State and received too many petitions. She continued her line of conduct and kept a finger in every pie. Further, she worked all the more because Puysieux seemed to become less able to work himself, owing to having fallen desperately in love with the beautiful Madame de Flavacourt. Owing to the intensity of his passion for that member of the Nesle family, who was nicknamed at Court *la poule*, the unhappy Minister of Foreign Affairs became thinner from day to day. Pompadour finding him grown useless for other matters, employed him chiefly as her emissary and go-between with the brothers Pâris—notably Pâris-Duverney.

Meanwhile, the Comte Phélippeaux de Maurepas seemed to continue secure in the Royal favour, and held his head higher than ever when Madame Infante, as the wife of Don Philip was called, arrived from Spain. Received at Versailles with the most ruinous extravagance by her father, Louise Élisabeth seemed to have come to stay, the pretence being that the palace at Parma, where her husband was, required endless repairs before it would be fit for the haughty Princesse to live in. The fact was that she cared nothing for Don Philip, of whom she had seen very little, although he was the father of the little girl who accompanied the Infanta to France. Always the friend of Spain, Maurepas now gave himself more airs than ever.

One day Madame de Pompadour, accompanied by her scheming friend the Comtesse d'Estrades, paid Maurepas a visit, when the favourite said to him, "People cannot say that I send for the Ministers; I come to find them." Then she added, "When will you know the author of those libellous songs?"

Maurepas replied, "When I know, I will inform the King."

The Marquise returned, "Monsieur, you do not appear to make too much of the King's mistresses."

M. de Maurepas was equal to the occasion—he answered casually, "I have always respected them—of *whatever kind they might be*!"

The Marquise and her friend rose in a hurry, and left the impertinent courtier to congratulate himself upon his rudeness.

A fortnight later, on the morning of April 22nd, 1749, the King was in a particularly good humour with Maurepas. He listened to his stories and *bons mots*, and laughed over his quips and little bits of scandal. Presently the King made up his mind to go off for a day or two's amusement to his château at Choisy; whereupon Maurepas said that he would pass the day at the wedding of Mademoiselle de Maupeou to the Comte de Laval-Montmorency.

"Mind you have a good time and amuse yourself well," said Louis, and departed, leaving the Minister of Marine in the highest of spirits.

This occurred on a Tuesday morning, and the courtiers, witnesses of the scene, were convinced that nothing could shake Maurepas in the Royal favour. Nevertheless, a day or two previously some verses with a double meaning had appeared—a quatrain of which the point was in the last line, which had a disgusting second intention. The first three were:

Par vos façons nobles et franches
Iris, vous enchantez nos cœurs;
Sur nos pas vous semez des fleurs.

At Versailles it had been clearly understood that

this quatrain could but have emanated from Maurepas, for the reason that they referred to an incident which had occurred at one of the King's *petits soupers*. There had been present at this only the Marquise de Pompadour, the Comtesse d'Estrades, and Maurepas. A bouquet of white hyacinths had been carried by the Marquise, who had broken it up and scattered all the petals on the floor.

On the following Thursday Maurepas was expected at the Opera, where a new piece was to be played expressly for him. For a long time he was awaited in vain, when suddenly a member of the audience cried out, "M. de Maurepas was exiled this morning!"

The news was true—the King had given one more instance of that dissimulation which he invariably assumed when about to strike a heavy blow. On the morning of Thursday, April 24th, 1749, the Comte d'Argenson had handed to the self-confident Minister a letter in these terms:

"I had told you, Monsieur, that I should warn you when your services were no longer necessary to me. I keep my word with you. Get ready to proceed to Bourges as soon as possible. In the meantime, see few people, even of your family. I would have allowed you to go to Pont-Chartrain, if it had not been too near Versailles and Paris. No answer.

"LOUIS."

It may be remembered that Maurepas' father and grandfather were celebrated Ministers who figured only under the name of Pontchartrain, from their country seat. Hence the allusion. Bourges, whither Maurepas



COMTE PHÉLIPPEAUX DE MAUREPAS.

was exiled, had been previously selected by the King as the first place of banishment for M. de Chauvelin, Keeper of the Seals, in Fleury's days as First Minister.

Thus was Madame de Pompadour able to cry quits at last with the sharp-tongued Minister who had been a Court sneak and a tell-tale during all his Ministry, which had been practically all his life, since he was first made Secretary of State when a boy between fourteen and fifteen. In being revenged for herself, she was avenging the late Duchesse de Châteauroux also; moreover, the vengeance was a lasting one. When Louis XV. punished, he never forgave. As it had been with M. de Chauvelin, as with the Duc de Châtillon and others, so it was with Maurepas. The exile was for life. In the case of the Comte, it was for the King's life. This kept Maurepas in exile for a good long time, a quarter of a century, as the Well-Beloved did not die until May, 1774. When that event occurred, at the age of sixty-three, Maurepas was recalled, at the instances of Madame Adélaïde and the Duc de la Vrillière, formerly Saint-Florentin, the cruel Minister of the State Prisons.

While the Queen and the Dauphin wept at the disgrace of their favourite, it was generally understood that it was owing to her alliance with Richelieu in a great measure that Pompadour had been able to get rid of her verse-writing enemy. A courtier remarked at the Palais-Royal, "It is M. de Richelieu who had Maurepas exiled; when he chooses, he will exile the King himself!"

Richelieu had in fact become a great favourite, not only with the King, but among the people. Profligate as he was, the populace admired the Maréchal-Duc, probably on account of that very profligacy which he

exercised in such Royal style in a city as libertine as the Court which it copied.

It was said that on the night following his exile Maurepas proceeded to Versailles in disguise and saw the Queen, and that further he contrived to carry off from his bureau a mass of papers which he had feared would have already been put under seal. He left many friends behind him in Paris, several of whom, like himself, were makers of verses. One of these, M. de Bazoncourt, was arrested, while others, such as the Marquis de Caylus and Marquis de Pont de Veyle, were thrown into the greatest state of alarm.

With the departure of the Comte from the scene the King found, to his great discontent, that his influence had remained behind. He complained bitterly to his confessor, the Père Pérusseau, that the Royal family had been stirred up against himself. Above all, the King was shocked at the abominable and low expressions which were reported to him daily as being used by his daughters against the mistress. Her they called a disgraceful name which they had been taught by the Comte Jean Frédéric Phélippeaux de Maurepas, a man of such culture and refinement that the Academies of Science and Literature had been placed under his supervision.

CHAPTER XXVI

Manners and Morals at the Court of Stanislas

1737—1766

At the end of the War of the Polish Succession the firmness of Chauvelin, Keeper of the Seals, in overcoming the effete policy of the womanish Cardinal Fleury, secured the province of Lorraine for King Stanislas Lesczynski. The ex-King of Poland accordingly took possession of that duchy in 1737, and established his Court at Lunéville, a pretty city on the right bank of the Meurthe, near its junction with the Vezouse. This Court soon became a lively place of residence under the easy-going Polish ruler.

Lunéville is two hundred and forty miles east of Paris and seventy-three west of Strasbourg, in Alsace. In ancient times Metz had been the capital of Lorraine, which was known originally as the Kingdom of Austrasia, and then as the Kingdom of Metis, or Metz, until the middle of the ninth century, when the name Lorraine was assumed. The city of Metz, which from the eleventh century was famous for its commerce with Germany, its brilliant society, and its love of letters and art, was in the year 1552 united to France. The inhabitants of Lorraine were mostly of Germanic race, but only

in a small district between the Vosges Mountains and Metz was German spoken; it was therefore called German Lorraine. The province, roughly speaking, contained, in the Duchy of Lorraine, Lorraine proper, German Lorraine, and the territory of the Vosges. It also included, at times, the Duchy of Bar, the capital of which was Bar-le-Duc, and the "three Bishoprics," which were Metz, Toul, and Verdun. This Duchy of Bar had been all that the Austrians had proposed to cede to Stanislas, when for the second time ejected from his Kingdom of Poland; and that Fleury had expressed himself as willing to accept until Chauvelin intervened. Then the Duke Francis of Lorraine was compelled to abandon the whole of his dominions and to accept the reversion of the Grand Dukedom of Tuscany; for which he did not have long to wait. Stanislas obtained Lorraine for life, with reversion to France at his death.

Under the Roman Emperors the country had formed part of the province of Belgica Prima, and under Otho the Great in the tenth century it was given by him to his brother, Bruno of Cologne, and divided into Upper and Lower Lorraine. Lower Lorraine subsequently became Brabant, a province of the Dukes of Burgundy, and is now part of Belgium, containing Brussels as its principal city.

Gérard of Alsace obtained Upper Lorraine from the Emperor Henry III., and was the ancestor of the long line of Dukes who, with some interruptions, ruled Lorraine until Stanislas obtained its sovereignty in the year 1737. While Duke Francis, married to Maria Theresa, became the founder, both in Tuscany and in Austria, of the line of Hapsburg-Lorraine, Stanislas Lesczynski ruled Lorraine with great benevolence until

1766, when he died, and it was annexed to France. It remained French until the Germans took both Alsace and Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.

As the home of the celebrated Guise family, which was a branch of the Ducal line, Lorraine had for about two hundred years furnished many both bold and intriguing spirits to France, while, since a Guise was the mother of Mary Queen of Scots, there are but few Royal families in Europe at the present day who have not still some of the old Lorraine blood in their veins.

For a description of the Court at Lunéville, as it existed in the year 1746, we have a letter written by the President of the Parliament, Hénault, who was a great favourite with Queen Marie Lesczynska. He says: "We regret not to have seen the reign of Henri IV., but we have only got to go to Lunéville and one will find it. Stanislas has a gay style of conversation, he says the most light and merry things. He tells a story well, sees clearly, and has a fruitful and agreeable imagination, as one can easily observe by visiting his houses and noting the peculiarities at La Malgrange, which are endless. All that is not built in our style, and at last I was afraid of finding myself in Turkey, when happily I was reassured by seeing in the wood a statue of Saint Francis instead of a figure of Mahomed.

"Recently a foreign *seigneur*, who is well known, presented himself to Stanislas for an employment at his Court similar to that which he formerly filled at the Court of Lorraine. 'What charge did you hold?' asked Stanislas.—"Sire, I was the Grand Master of the Ceremonies."—"Gad! sir," repied the King, "I don't even allow that any one should ever bow to me!"

This was true. Although Stanislas had been liberally

supplied from the French Court with officials, he allowed them to dispense with the excess of ceremony and boring etiquette of Versailles. One man—la Galasière—filled four posts at once: Chancellor, Keeper of the Seals, Chief of the Council, and Minister of French Affairs.

The post of Grand Master had been given to the Duke Ossolinski, a bold spirit who formerly had seized and carried off the diamonds from the Polish crown. At Lunéville this hero became as lamblike as his master. There were scores of other officers, as Grand Chamberlains, Ordinary Chamberlains, and Chamberlains of Honour, Grand Wolf-catchers, Masters of the Horse, Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, and so on. Many of these bore well-known names, such as Zaluski, Wiltz, d'Ossonville, de Béthune, Choiseul or du Châtelet; but most of their offices were mere sinecures. The last-named noble was for fifteen years the complaisant husband of the good-looking, literary lady who was the mistress and hostess of Voltaire at Cirey. As Houssaye remarks: "The husbands of those days were much easier to get along with than those of the present times. M. le Marquis du Châtelet lived in community with the Marquise du Châtelet and M. de Voltaire her lover. They were two unquiet and turbulent creatures, always ready to take fire, always armed for controversy, always burning for tumult and *éclat*. Madame du Châtelet was no better Catholic than Voltaire; her motto, which she placed on her escutcheon, was a sentence of the poets—'Happiness is the aim; he who has acquired it has gained his salvation.'

"She resembled Voltaire in her tastes, had, like him, a passion for science and *petits soupers*, for the fine arts and gaming, for philosophy and fine clothes. They saw

one another—they loved one another. M. du Châtelet did not complain—he was another philosopher."

Voltaire was for some time at the Court of Stanislas with this lady. Besides her knowledge of Latin, she set to work to learn three or four living languages, and had translated Newton and analysed Leibnitz. Their time was passed there quite as much in fighting as in love-making. They quarrelled upon every earthly subject—philosophy, physics, metaphysics, and literature. M. du Châtelet would reconcile the disputants, when all three would weep together. As we know, Madame du Châtelet had other amusements at Lunéville—she listened too readily to the impassioned madrigals of Saint-Lambert—to her misfortune.

Among the other ladies at this Court in Lorraine, Madame de Linanges was Lady of Honour to the Queen. The Marquise de Boufflers, Madame de Salles, daughter of the Duchesse de Brancas, the Marquise de Choiseul, and Madame de Raigecourt were Ladies of the Palace. Of these, Madame de Boufflers was the Pompadour of this imitation of Versailles, and fond of the fine arts. This lady and the King did much between them to civilise the *noblesse* of Lorraine, most of whom before the reign of Stanislas did not even know how to read. The commencement of his reign was indeed signalised by nothing but crazy and violent love affairs, terrible jealousies, duels and suicides. Stanislas, by the influence of letters, philosophy, and quieter and more decent pleasures, endeavoured, and with a certain amount of success, to tame down the uncouthness of his courtiers of Lorraine.

One of the most celebrated scandals which disgraced this Court was that caused by a young lady, daughter

of the Marquise de Mézières. She was the sister of the Princesse de Montauban and Princesse de Ligne; and being a favourite of the Queen of Poland, became installed as Canoness of the Abbey du Poussay, the Queen intending later to make her an Abbesse.

As *chanoinesse*, she was called Madame, although unmarried. The world therefore has heard of her as Madame de Béthisy. Although the Canonesses of the Chapter of du Poussay were accustomed to getting themselves talked about, they expressed themselves as scandalised when the young Madame de Béthisy eloped with her cousin, an Irishman, Lord Tyrconnell.

Six of them wrote to the Queen, demanding that she should be bidden to return to the Abbey, as her journey dishonoured the house to the extent that it was said that she had absented herself "*pour aller faire ses couches.*" Thereupon the Queen told the six *chanoinesses* to keep quiet, mind their own business, and not spread scandals; and two months later, Madame de Béthisy having returned from her little trip, they were forced to make her an apology in the presence of her mother and four officers sent from the Court.

The Queen was still determined to make an Abbesse of this free-and-easy young lady, when she suddenly indulged in a new flight—this time with her own brother! after which, solely, she said, when he ceased to love her, in order to make her brother jealous, she indulged in a libertine career with the Marquis de Meuse.

Eventually, after writing a very long letter of love and remorse to her brother, in which she said that she had never really loved Meuse, this ill-regulated young lady blew her brains out in the Abbey du Poussay. She

was, says the chronicler, " universally regretted ! " (April 5th, 1742).

Such, then, was the style of manners and morals of Lorraine before King Stanislas endeavoured to soften them down and civilise the State by the influence of education and philosophy ; but it cannot be said by his personal example. Nor can much be said for the Polish Queen in her choice of favourites.

The character of the Court was one of mixed gallantry and devotion, dashed over and above with the principles of that modern philosophy of which Fontenelle, Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, and others were the exponents. The King of Poland made no concealment of what he termed " his little peccadilloes " from time to time, while the *seigneurs* and ladies of the Court were far less decent and reserved even than the King.

While the Court of Lunéville was thus the abode of unbridled pleasures, Stanislas, having abolished ceremonial, lived more in the style of a rich gentleman of the period than in that becoming the father of the Queen of France.

The manners and morals of Lunéville, even as they existed under the King's roof, were of a rough-and-ready description. When Stanislas had escaped from Dantzic, where he was besieged by the Russians, Austrians, and Saxons, he had carried off two Polish ladies with him. To one of these, the Duchess Ossolinska, he was much attached, while her sister, called the Princess Palatine of Russia, did not make the Polish Colonel of the Cavalry of the Guards, the Chevalier de Wiltz, languish in vain for her favours.

The late Duc de Bourbon, before his second marriage, had declined to accept this lady when she was offered

him as a wife, but de Taillebourg, who became Duc de Châtellerault, was not so particular. He married the Princess Palatine of Russia upon the understanding that she was to give up de Wiltz. The lady did not keep her bargain, but continued her intercourse with the Chevalier as before, while her husband devoted himself to serious studies.

One day, while the Princess was flirting with Wiltz, the Duc de Châtellerault retired to read a serious book of philosophy. Dinner time arriving, he sent word by the servant that Madame could begin without him, and went on reading. Madame herself then came, but Monsieur would not give up his book. The Chevalier de Wiltz next followed the Princess, to say that the soup was getting cold. The Duc merely remarked, "Get out! I am reading." The Chevalier thereupon commenced humorously to insist upon the Duc coming to dinner, making fun of him. Snatching up the branched silver candlestick from the table, Châtellerault flung it with all his force at the head of his wife's lover. Wiltz dodged the missile, which smashed a mirror, and in a second both the men had their swords out and had flown at each other, while the screams of the Princess added to the confusion.

The King, hearing the disturbance, rushed in, to find his two favourites fighting furiously among overturned tables, chairs, books, and inkstands. With the greatest trouble, and at considerable personal risk, Stanislas managed to knock up their swords and to keep the combatants separated.

The soup was quite cold by the time that the dinner table was reached that evening, nor did the Duc appear at the board. He went off to Paris, where, having taken

the title of Prince de Talmont, he became devout, and lived alone until de Wiltz died. Then, by his confessor's instructions, and for the edification of the public, he lived again in the same hôtel as his wife.

King Stanislas having given to the Prince de Talmont the regiment which de Wiltz had commanded, he returned to Lunéville, where another confessor, coupled with devotion, brought about a complete reconciliation between husband and wife, according to the manners and customs of the times, especially at Lunéville.

Another story of love, vengeance on a spy, faithful friendship, seduction, jealousy, and passion, one even containing an element of the comic, was that of the amours of the Comte, afterwards Prince de Salm, who was the Rhingrave of the Rhine, with Mademoiselle, or Madame, de Lamberty, a young *chanoinesse* of Remiremont. It forms a complete romance, of which the characters are the Rhingrave, Mademoiselle de la Plotte, afterwards wife of the Chevalier de Meuse, the Marquise de Boufflers, mistress of Stanislas and bosom friend of the last-mentioned lady, the young *chanoinesse*, her mother, a spy employed by Mademoiselle de la Plotte, the Comte de Vanbanglart, the Rhingrave's sister, and the daughter of the Prince de Horn.

The story is too long to relate in detail, but we may give an incident. Both the Rhingrave and the Chanoinesse de Lamberty, who had been on the point of eloping together, persisted in declaring to the young lady's furious mother that there had been nothing wrong in their conduct.

At last the mother, wild with rage at hearing so much barefaced lying, screamed out at the Rhingrave, "I have read all your letters!" The young noble, thus

convicted, burst out laughing, and sought refuge in flight by the door. He married the daughter of the Prince de Horn a few days later in Flanders; while the *chanoinesse* was also united, by the matrimonial bond this time, to the nephew of the Abbé de Saint-Hubert.

By the foregoing incidents it is easy to perceive that the fact of a little slip beforehand was considered no bar to the subsequent honourable establishment of a young lady at the Court of Lunéville.

Two of the oldest Lorraine families, whose names are well known owing to services rendered to France, were those of Stainville and Beauveau. The Ducs and Marquis de Choiseul were of the former family, and the Princes de Craon belonged to the latter. Of all the Lorraine nobility, these families stand out as having possessed some glimmerings of education and fewer instincts of primeval savagery than the rest.

Upon his advent to Lunéville, Stanislas found them both devoted to the cause of the old Ducal family. When he sought to make of the Marquis de Stainville his Grand Chamberlain, that noble excused himself, saying that he preferred to follow his late master, Duke Francis of Lorraine, and keep his table for him at Brussels, although obliged to live upon a small pension. The Prince de Craon, however, although equally attached to the late Duke, elected to remain at Lunéville. He had lived in peace and amity with his wife for nearly fifty years; although, as the former Dukes had been in the habit of making of the Hôtel Beauveau almost their own home, of course the Prince had not failed to hear his wife given out as being the mistress of one of them. She was a demoiselle de Ligneville and the mother of twenty-two children.



From an engraving after the picture by Lunebourg.

STANISLAS LESCZYNSKI,
King of Poland, Ruler of Lorraine.

Stanislas looked upon this house with suspicion ; he feared treason from a family too devoted to the line which he had replaced, and one which he himself disliked. One day, either as a sly jest or by way of making his court to the King, the Prince de Craon offered to him a fine piece of statuary, which he had admired as such. It was the statue of the Duke Francis of Lorraine, which Craon greatly valued. "It would be very useless to me," said Stanislas.

"Why so?" replied the Prince de Craon. "Since your Majesty finds the statue so beautiful, I will have the head changed and your Majesty's head substituted."

The King of Poland was quite embarrassed at this insistence. "Leave things as they are," he said. "You could never give to the statue my corpulence, thus it would never resemble me."

The arbitrary manner in which the Duchy used to be ruled by the Dukes of Lorraine is exemplified by an incident in the annals of the Beauveau family in 1728, which shows also how good was the credit of the Prince de Craon at Court in those days. Having, on the death of Madame de Ludes, wished to make one of his numerous daughters Abbess of Épinal in the deceased lady's place, de Craon obtained the Duke's support. That Prince sent some commissioners to cause the election, willy-nilly, of the young lady, who was only fourteen. The French, Lorraine, and German Canonesses of the convent resisted, saying that election was free, and that, according to their rules, they must elect one of their own number, not a young lady who had belonged to another conventual establishment. The Duke sent word that he would exile from his State all who did not vote for Mademoiselle de Beauveau and, moreover, seize their stipends. This

brought the ladies of Épinal to reason—the youthful daughter of the Prince de Craon became their Abbess.

The interesting point about this incident is, that it shows how much greater was the power of the Dukes of Lorraine where the Church was concerned than that of the Kings of France. Throughout the reigns of Louis XIII., Louis XIV., and Louis XV., there were occasionally tussles between the Crown and the clergy, in which the Church as a body invariably issued as victor. Even the great Cardinal Richelieu, in his capacity of all-powerful Minister, was unable to compel the obedience of the clergy in various matters, such as paying taxes or the abolition of the tenets of Quietism, when they became rampant in the convents—especially in Picardy.

Two sons and nine daughters survived of the family of the Prince de Craon. Four daughters he put into the Church, and five he married well. De Morvet, de Mirepoix, de Chimay, de Bassompierre, and de Boufflers, were the names of the great nobles who became their husbands. His son the Prince de Beauveau became a Maréchal in the service of France, while his other son, the Chevalier de Beauveau, was killed at the battle of Fontenoy. The Maréchal Prince de Beauveau succeeded the Maréchal de Mirepoix in the post of Grand Master of the Household of the King of Poland, when, forgetting his father's predilection for the old Ducal house, he made very successful efforts to turn the Lorrainers into Frenchmen. He did more than any one else to improve the tone and manners of the Court of Lunéville, and while being himself a man of a noble presence and decent mode of life, was also an accomplished scholar. Towards the end of the reign of Stanislas his presence at Lunéville was a distinctly improving influence.

Voltaire, although so greatly sought after at one time by Frederick the Great, was not at Lunéville so highly appreciated in his person as by his poems and other works. The spoilt child of the human race, he took little pains to make himself agreeable, but gave free sway to his frequently peevish temper, and thus was often almost insupportable. Priding himself on his high literary reputation, he did not trouble to play the courtier at Lunéville after having failed at Versailles. Moreover, he lived in the most free-and-easy style, as if he were still at Cirey or at his own country château, Les Délices.

Despite the liberties, usually trifling ones, which the jovial King Stanislas good-humouredly allowed himself with the fair sex even to an advanced age, there was nothing low or base about him as there was about his son-in-law the King of France. None of the horrid stories of young girls of tender age being stolen or purchased, so frequently heard in Paris, which city justly accused its King, were ever to be heard in Lunéville. Stanislas, on the contrary, acted like a father to the people who had fallen under his rule when he definitely lost Poland. While endeavouring to detach his Duchy from the interests of the house of Lorraine, and occasionally in so doing being guilty of some arbitrary measures, he showered benefits upon the inhabitants.

Himself fond of all that was fine, devoted to letters and the arts, he strove by all means to embellish his capital—he erected statues and established academies. Like Frederick the Great, imbued with philosophical ideas, he was also, like him, an author of no mean powers. The Church, as represented by the fanatical Bishop of Verdun, even saw fit to prevent for a considerable period the publication of one of his philosophical works.

For a King, however, he indulged in curious habits: one of these was, like Cardinal Mazarin before him, occasionally cheating at cards; another that of writing anonymous pamphlets to enforce his views on the subject of Austria, which country he detested—and with reason. In his conversation he was witty to a degree, he was quick and clever at a repartee, and told a good story. An early riser, he went to bed at nine, and always ate with a good appetite.

His wife never ceased to be jealous of Stanislas, and never ceased to regret Poland. At the age of sixty these were still her most prominent ideas, and to her last hour the ex-Queen cherished the idea of regaining the Polish Crown. She had a considerable Household, but it was conducted with economy, as also was that of the King. He saved largely upon a small income for a potentate in his position, which was 2,400,000 francs, and he employed some of his savings in the cause of humanity.

Stanislas went to Paris as seldom as possible; but when he did so treated the King with respect, but his daughter with the most homely affection and *sans-gêne*. Throwing himself down for a nap in the Queen's apartments upon a sofa, he would say, "Marie, mind my wig—be sure and let nobody touch it until I have had forty winks."

The manner in which Stanislas contrived to save was a cause of marvel to Louis XV. Especially was he astonished when—before the death of Cardinal Fleury, in January, 1743—the King of Poland remitted to France the sum of 400,000 francs to be invested in the State. The interest to be paid to him, of 40,000 francs a year, he made revertible in case of his death to the Queen

of Poland, and after her to his daughter Marie Lesczynska. Louis thought it a very good joke that money should be invested thus for the benefit of a Queen of France, and remarked, "That is a good lesson to myself." It was a lesson, however, which he never properly learned, for he always kept the Queen upon a very short allowance, part of which she devoted to charity.

At his death Stanislas left all his splendid furniture to Louis, on condition that he should pay legacies, to the extent of eight millions, for good works and for the officers and servants of his household, for the purchase of wheat for the poor, and other charities. When, on February 22nd, 1766, King Stanislas breathed his last, never was there a Monarch so much regretted as the ex-King of Poland in Lorraine.

Two years before him, died his jealous, malicious, and amusing little dwarf, Bébé, only nineteen inches high at the age of twenty-three. The adventures and tricks of this pretty little dwarf would fill a book. They remind one of Gulliver's voyage to Brobdingnag. The ladies of the Court were always in terror of sitting upon Bébé, one of whose tricks consisted in creeping under chairs or petticoats where least expected, and frightening unsuspecting ladies into fits.

CHAPTER XXVII

Court Etiquette and Pompadour's Magnificence

1749—1753

WHEN the student has carefully followed the history of the French Court and kingdom from the death of the Regent in 1723; when he has pried into the secrets of the Court, followed the careers of the King, Queen, Royal Family, Royal mistresses, Ministers, and Courtiers, until the year 1749, he finds himself brought up by a break in the road—there is a change ahead in the route. The Royal road, which leads onwards for another quarter of a century through the reign of the Well-Beloved, and which has hitherto been straight and easy enough to follow, commences at that date, in many branches, to turn and twist upon itself, sometimes to go forwards, sometimes backwards; the policy of France—or shall we not say that of Versailles?—has turned the course of that road into various new and unfamiliar directions.

Pausing in front of the Palace of Versailles, upon the threshold of the new departure, the wayfaring student scans with a somewhat puzzled interest the inscriptions upon the arms of the new sign-post which has been put up, while reading some such directions as follow: "Quarrels with the clergy—Quarrels with the Parliament—Quarrels with the people—Dismissal of the Comte

d'Argenson—Difficulties with the brothers Pâris—Persecution of the Protestants—Persecution of the Jansenists." There is also an inscription, "Expulsion of the Jesuits." Other arms of the post will be inscribed, "To Madame Infante, to Madame Henriette, to Madame Adélaïde"—this last one written very plainly, showing that the road it points out is of considerable importance to the King.

Glancing at the foot of the sign-post, is seen lying, where it has been thrown, an old and rotting piece of wood. The inscription which it bears, still legible, runs, "To Prussia." Since it evidently came from the top of the pole, the traveller, before starting on his new journey, glances upward to see what has replaced "To Prussia." Lo, and behold! in very clear and black letters upon a dazzling white ground, the words "To Austria" shine before his eyes. As if the direction were not enough, and as though to verify its correctness, two names are painted below—these are, Kaunitz and Choiseul!

The wearied traveller, before being able to make up his mind to follow in turn all of these different roads, thinks that perhaps a preliminary rest may be advisable. At all events, he decides to examine their condition, since to traverse them will require a new supply of stout shoe-leather, that which he wears having already become muddy and worn. He glances back, along the straight route which he has already followed in his journey with Louis XV. It seems to him that he has already been obliged to encounter much that is far from pleasant on that Royal causeway. He looks forward once more, to a post which, standing by itself, has but one arm, bearing the inscription, "To the Parc aux Cerfs." It points along a lane; one glance along

that lane is enough, its condition is filth!—sheer filth!

A rest and restorative are decidedly advisable before following that road for twenty-five years in company with him whom they have called the Well-Beloved! Faugh! the very thought of his society is enough. "*Après moi le déluge*," indeed! It is a pity that his subjects, already grown revolutionary by the first months of 1750, did not catch him whom already they called Herod—the butcher of children—and plunge him into that deluge then, instead of contenting themselves by feebly crying, "*Brûlons Versailles!*"

But the Bien-Aimé had become frightened and cautious. When he wished to go to his suspicious little house at La Muette, he started before daylight and travelled all round outside the walls of Paris. "Why?" exclaimed this hoggish King, "should I journey through the streets? Why should I wish to see a people who call me Herod? I prefer to go round." The people later named the route that Louis followed by the title of Chemin de la Révolte. But that was when they had another Louis in their clutches, an innocent idiot, whom they caused cruelly to suffer for the sins of his grandfather and all his Bourbon ancestry.

Let us, however, turn our eyes with the student wayfarer back from those onward pathways leading to the Seven Years' War and defeat at Rosbach, to the mastery of the Austrian Kaunitz, to the affectionate letters in which the haughty Maria Theresa cringes to Pompadour and calls her "Cousin." Finally, let us not look on just at present to those disgraceful years during which one of the lowest of women, Mademoiselle Lange, under the name of Madame du Barry, lives upon equal terms with The

Very Christian King in his splendid château of Versailles.

For in that château, if we pause to look within, apart from the haughty favourite seated at her desk conducting the Ministers—while waiting yet a little longer to encourage literature and science by backing up the philosophic authors of the *Encyclopédie*—strange sights may be observed. Strange quarrels among the servantry upon the subject of etiquette among themselves were constantly occurring, and especially among those of the Queen's household. Since, owing to these dissensions upon the subject of their respective duties, the good-natured Marie Lesczynska was sometimes compelled to forego some of the few pleasures which she was ever allowed to enjoy, we can see how wise was her father, King Stanislas, to abolish all etiquette from his Court at Lunéville.

An example of this slavery of all Versailles to the laws of etiquette was to be seen one day when the Queen was making the rounds of the Royal apartments with the Duchesse de Luynes. Her Majesty, observing some dust upon the counterpane of her grand official bed, known as the Queen's *lit de parade*, pointed it out to her companion. Madame de Luynes then sent for the official who bore the title of *valet de chambre tapissier* to the Queen, who was on duty in that part of the palace. This post of tapestry *valet de chambre* was, by-the-bye, the sole official post which the poet Molière ever held at the Court of King Louis XIV., when it was not considered one of much consideration. To resume, when the Queen's valet had come, the Duchess de Luynes did not tell him to remove the dust, but to go and fetch the King's *valet de chambre tapissier* and show the counter-

pane to him. He arrived, whereupon he maintained to Her Majesty that this particular dust did not concern him. He admitted, however, that the *valets de chambre tapissiers* made the Queen's bed, but, he said, as for the bed of parade, when the Queen was not sleeping in it, that article came under the heading of *meuble*—furniture. He could not touch it—the dust only then concerning the officers of the *garde meuble*. It took two entire days before it could be discovered whose duty it was—in accordance with the charge which he had purchased—to remove that dust! In the meantime, if the Queen had chosen to occupy the bed of parade, she would have been compelled to sleep in it dusty, or else dust it herself, for fear of interference with any one's prerogative.

The tasting of the dishes at meal-times was another function even more serious than that of removing a speck or two of dust. There were five gentlemen deputed to this charge, who stood in front of each large dish. One was the chief, and ordered the four others in his presence to taste. These gentlemen were called *officiers de la bouche*, and they were compelled to taste fruit, ices, vegetables, as well as the meats at every meal before the King was served. Four or five others tasted the wines—the chief of these was called the *chef du gobelet*.

One of the excuses which Louis XV. gave for his all too frequent absences to his *petits cabinets* in the *petites maisons* of Choisy or La Muette, was that he wished to escape the etiquette which, at Versailles, made it impossible for him to receive whom he liked openly. Very few persons were allowed to enter by the main doors leading to any of the Royal apartments; but little hidden doors, leading on to hidden staircases, were

constructed in the walls, on purpose for the admission of those not of very high rank. At Choisy the King received whom he chose and how he chose—his mistresess, or ladies of known gallantry and a few male favourites, who might well be termed his *roués*, as were those of the Regent before him.

The unfortunate Queen was, however, unable always in a similar manner to escape from etiquette when she went to the Château de Trianon, which had been given to her for her amusement. A serious quarrel, which took place between the Governor of the Trianon and Her Majesty's fruit-woman, as to which had the right to provide the candles, kept Marie Lesczynska away from the Trianon for two whole years. Good-natured soul as she was, she did not wish to offend either party, and so kept away altogether.

In nothing did the Queen show this kindness of disposition more than in the excessive consideration with which she treated Madame de Pompadour, when, as Madame d'Étioles, she first was installed at Versailles as the King's mistress. Unworthy as was this designing woman—who had deserted a husband passionately attached to her and her surviving little girl to gain the King—Marie Lesczynska was sorry for her, when she heard the courtiers and ladies-of-honour mimicking her too *bourgeois* pronunciation and use of words which were considered slangy and vulgar.

The Queen having been forced by the King to accept the public presentation of his mistress, all the jealous ladies of the Court were looking forward to seeing her coldly and slightingly received. They had made up their minds, in advance, that the only subject of conversation in which the Queen would indulge would be

a stilted remark or two upon the subject of the dress of the débutante. Being aware of this, Marie Lesczynska purposely avoided the subject of dress, and talked affably to Madame d'Étioles about some great lady, as if to infer that she belonged to the same society. While, however, she was received in this flattering manner, Pompadour had no answer to make, when the Queen asked her to give her the latest news of Madame de Saissac. The sole reply she could think of was to say, "Madame, I have the greatest passion to please you."

In making this remark, which was scarcely à propos, Pompadour, however, doubtless told the truth. Throughout her career of twenty years as the King's official favourite, the Marquise always showed consideration for the Queen and behaved with a studied humility towards her. To the Dauphin and the Princesses, however, she never lost an opportunity of doing an ill turn with the King; especially did she reciprocate the hatred which she knew that the Dauphin bore her. The Queen, however, was grateful for the favourite's studied humility, and even went so far as to dine in her society one day at Choisy when the King was there ill.

The King, who had shown himself so niggardly with Madame de Mailly that he even allowed that good-hearted lady to impoverish herself on his behalf, behaved in a very different manner to the insatiable Madame de Pompadour. When the people of France were starving, he always could find money for her. One reason may have been that he went into business himself, and, in the year 1749 and later, speculated in wheat, no doubt under the advice of the brothers Pâris, the farmers-general, her god-fathers. With the poor dying of starva-

tion, the King was able, no doubt, to make an enormous profit by the "corner" which he established in wheat, of which a large supply was collected in various granaries. These, although not declared as such, the hungry people knew to be Royal.

Long before 1749, however, the King's mistress had become rich. In the first six months of her reign she was allowed 180,000 livres a year and the Marquisate and estates of Pompadour. A Royal lodging was also then provided for her in all of the King's châteaux. In 1746 she purchased Selle, for 160,000, and at once expended 60,000 in repairing the castle on the property; and in the same year she also bought the château and estate of Crécy for 700,000. In addition, she acquired a charge on the treasury of the Royal stables worth half a million of livres.

The public were already furious at learning how the usually avaricious and miserly King was lavishing his money on this favourite, when on January 1st, 1747, he presented her with some magnificent diamond-encrusted tablets, inlaid with the three towers which she had selected as her arms, and bearing also the arms of the King. Her brother meanwhile was created Marquis de Vandières; which name the people facetiously altered into the *Marquis d'Avant-hier*. This title was coupled with the post of the Captaincy of la Grenelle, which brought him in 100,000 livres of income. He afterwards became Marquis de Marigny.

It would be fatiguing to recapitulate all the known sums of money that Madame de Pompadour acquired during the following years. During the ascendancy in the King's affections of several of his daughters in succession, he did not give her so much in cash as in the earlier

days; but somehow she always contrived to continue to purchase new châteaux, estates, and magnificent hôtels. An hôtel at Fontainebleau and the Château d'Aulnay in 1749; the château of Brimborion in 1750; the estate of Marigny in the same year for her father, Poisson, who became a noble and died in 1754; the château and estate of Saint-Remi, and an hôtel at Compiègne, both in 1752; the magnificent hôtel of the Comte d'Evreux in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris in 1753,—such were only a few of her acquisitions bought with the money wrung from the starving poor, bought, too, in only nine years out of the twenty of her reign.

When the favourite commenced to refurnish and make extensive repairs upon this last-acquired mansion, when, moreover, Madame de Pompadour calmly appropriated and enclosed a piece of the Champs Élysées adjoining, the people of Paris went wild with fury at her extravagance and greed. In the course of one night the whole of the walls of the Hôtel d'Evreux were plastered with sarcastic lampoons and satires of the most offensive description. Moreover, on the following day, a mob collected and drove away the workmen employed in repairing this ancient aristocratic building by her whom they designated as *la grisette*.

Although always called by preference Marquise, the rights of Duchesse and Peeress of France were bestowed upon Madame de Pompadour on October 18th, 1752. She was accordingly granted the honour of the *tabouret*, which allowed her to be seated in the presence of the King and Queen.

When it is considered that many of the properties which she, who had been originally merely Mademoiselle Poisson, purchased—for instance, the beautiful Château

de Bellevue—could alone satisfy Princes of the Blood, it would almost seem as if the resources of this woman were limitless. She died very affluent at the age of forty-two, after having spent millions.

Madame de Pompadour has always been held up as having been the patroness of, not only men of science, but of artists. Her enemies say that she looked upon the great artists—Vernet, Pigale, la Tour, and others—merely in the light of so many house decorators; that, moreover, through the employment given by her to men of genius, she acquired for herself the reputation of being highly artistic in her tastes. At her death some of the works of art which she had bought for a moderate sum sold for three times what she had paid for them. Some of them were repurchased by the painters themselves at their enhanced value.

Whatever may have been her real nature, artistic or otherwise, one thing is certain—that she furnished her palaces as Royal palaces were furnished. She had funds in various foreign banks. London and Genoa, Amsterdam and Venice, were each the depositaries of part of her fortune. Therefore, in case misfortune had come, and, like du Barry, later she had been forced to fly to any of these foreign cities, she would not have found herself destitute, but well provided for.

With regard to her protection of the philosophers of the modern school of thought, it will be noticed that in several pictures still extant of this Royal courtesan she is seated with the greatest works of the day very much *en évidence* by her side. The *Encyclopédie*, the *Esprit des lois* by Montesquieu, such are the volumes in her hand or on her table. Opposed bitterly to the Jesuits, who would not ally themselves with her, they being of

the party of the Dauphin, it is more than probable that Madame de Pompadour became really imbued with the tenets which the Jesuits detested, and, moreover, the more inclined to lend a helping hand to those scoffers or men of genius who advanced those tenets. Whatever her enemies may say, it is more than probable that Diderot, d'Alembert, and the rest would never have obtained the permission to produce the often suppressed *Encyclopédie* without her assisting influence. Therefore, to her were due the thanks of those very revolutionary spirits who, educated by these works, would most assuredly, had she been alive a few years later, have torn in pieces the woman who protected the production of that first great exposition of modern scientific and revolutionary thought. It must not be forgotten that Madame du Barry, returning from London to Paris for her jewels, fell under the guillotine—how much more then would the greedy Marquise de Pompadour, detested by the poor, have suffered ?

Yet was not Madame de Pompadour removed from this world without leaving her name in connection with one good work. In the year 1746 she remembered that there really existed such ordinary beings as poor, miserable, and diseased persons. Accordingly, selling a quantity of diamonds for the purpose, she established a Hôtel-Dieu, or hospital for her peasants, on the estate at Crécy. It contained forty-eight beds, and its establishment cost the Marquise 600,000 livres. She obtained great praise for her benevolence from the journals of the day. Still more praise did she earn when, in company with her lover and lapdog the amiable and handsome Abbé de Bernis, Comte de Lyon, she left the delights of Versailles personally to inspect the manner in which the

institution was being managed by the Grey Sisters whom she had put in charge.

We have now, however, attained the bounds we had set ourselves the task of reaching in the present volume. It is a time of peace in France, and the muttering sounds of the Seven Years' War are yet afar off. Frederick the Great has for the moment turned his sword into a ploughshare, Louis has his internal affairs and his pleasures to keep him occupied. Let us, therefore, rest with the student-traveller in front of the portals of Versailles. When we resume our journey in the following volume, it will be to see the avenging sword of the Prussian flashing in the face of his former allies at Rosbach; to be held in astonishment upon finding that a camp has been surprised containing more hairdressers and women than French cavaliers.

END OF VOL. I



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